THE NEW TEMPLE

JOHAN BOJER

WITHDRAWN
BATES COLLEGE
LIBRARY STORAGE
BATES COLLEGE LIBRARY
LEWISTON, MAINE

496


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

https://archive.org/details/newtemple0000joha_v9m3

THE NEW TEMPLE

BOOKS BY JOHAN BOJER

THE NEW TEMPLE: 12 mo., 341 pp., $2.50

THE EMIGRANTS: 12 mo., 351 pp., $2.00

THE PRISONER WHO SANG: 12 mo., 295 pp., $2.00

A PILGRIMAGE: 12 mo., 225 pp., $2.00

THE LAST OF THE VIKINGS: 12 mo., 302 pp., $2.00

THE FACE OF THE WORLD: 12 mo., 328 pp., $2.00

THE GREAT HUNGER: 12 mo., 327 pp., $2.00

LIFE: 12 mo., 337 pp., $2.00

THE POWER OF A LIE: 12 mo., 311 pp., $2.00

TREACHEROUS GROUND: 12 mo., 301 pp., $2.00

THE NEW TEMPLE

BY

JOHAN BOJER

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN BY

C. ARCHER



THE CENTURY CO.

New York & London

257459

Copyright, 1928, by
JOHAN BOJER

First printing July, 1928

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

To

JOSEPH ANTHONY

FRIEND AND COMRADE

BOOK I

THE NEW TEMPLE

I

The Widow at Bruseth was dead.

And now the telephone rang over town and countryside: Have you heard the news? The forest districts round about were shaken wide awake, and men asked themselves and asked others: what will happen now? There was uneasiness in more than one bank. People who owed and people who were owed money, began to rout among their papers. In the little timber-built town by the lake shore the women stood in their doorways and talked with one another across the street. Folk who were on their way northward by the highway stopped and gazed up at the big farmstead under the fir-clad hilltop as though death might show in the look of the houses; while, even on the farther side of the lake, people came out with glasses and fixed them on the manor. Bruseth stood so high, it could be seen for miles and miles around, and toward it many a sinner had been wont to strain his anxious eyes, for thence had come much both of good and ill as the years went by.

But there, on this sunny day of spring, lay the big

manor, looking just the same as ever. The great house lay just as long and white, the outhouses were as many and as red, the garden fruit-trees stood in blossom there too. To many this seemed strange, for people had grown wont to think of the mistress and all she reigned over as one—the houses, the wide plow-lands and meadows, the league-long forest ridges, all were, in a sense, parts of her. For all things round belonged to her; aye, even in the little wooden town by the lakeside the ground-sites were leased from her, and she held a mortgage on most of the houses, for planks and timber were bought on credit from her sawmill. The electric light down there and in the neighboring parishes came from a powerhouse which was hers, and which she had built at her own waterfall long before the neighbor communes had thought of such a thing. She could easily have plunged both town and country-side into darkness if the whim had seized her some night—was it strange, then, that in the eyes of many she was fate itself both for town and country? And yet, the manor, the hills, the fields, and the town lay there the same as ever, now that she had closed her eyes.

Her name was Fru Margaret Alme, but everyone called her The Widow at Bruseth. And a widow she had been these forty years, and during that time she had managed the estate, speculated, gained and lost, ventured alone where none dared follow, and waged war, in court and out of court, with bankers and communes; aye, once or twice, even with the State itself.

She had made few friends and many enemies, and perhaps she liked the enemies best. Anyhow, so it seemed every first of May, when the workmen held their demonstrations in the little town, for then she would drive slowly through the streets for the pleasure of being hooted. In many ways she was a woman of the old school—she was capable of giving a workman a cuff on the ear and of swearing like a skipper; but the little Socialist paper was unjust to her when it always accused her of being a skinflint. How was it she kept her servants so long, and that her cottagers lived in such good houses? And to-day little boys are running with the news along roads and hill-paths, for this death will hit them too. The big, full-breasted woman, dressed always in violet and with gold spectacles on her red face, will never more come driving in her chaise, and fling silver to the little fellows as they stand bare-legged by the gate they have opened.

It was May; the farm folk had been busy since morning planting potatoes in the lower fields, but on in the day they learned what had happened, and the work came to a standstill of itself. Neither foreman nor bailiff was there to give them leave to stop, but to-day the unheard-of happened—they took things into their own hands; horses were unharnessed, and men and women took their way up toward the big house.

The great kitchen of the main building had, in the old fashion, a long table running down it, with benches on either side for the farm hands and cotters. It was a

hand's-breadth thick, cracked with age, scoured white, but with marks where hot pots and kettles had been set down in careless haste. Here had gathered to meals, on many a workday and holy day, sweating and sunburnt men and women; here had many a yarn been told, many a laugh had echoed while knives and spoons were plied. Nowadays the table missed an old friend—the great kitchen stove, that in the course of years had swallowed up whole forests of firewood. It lay rusting in an outhouse now, for in these latter days all the cooking here was electric; pots and pans and vessels were no longer black with soot, they shone, they never tasted flame and smoke any more. And the table too had got much too big, since the cottagers had taken to eating in their own homes.

One by one the work folk came in now and seated themselves on the long bench. They talked in low tones, as though some very important person was in the house. The old cook had sunk down upon a chair by the new stove; her hands lay limply in her lap and she wept quietly, but she had to tell again and again how it had happened. The mistress had risen about six, as was her wont, that she might see that everything was going forward as it should; and later in the day she was sitting in the office and got up to reach the telephone. The bailiff was sitting with her getting his orders, and he saw her drop down upon the floor. The doctor came flying on his motor-cycle, but it was all over by then.

It was a stroke. But then, to be sure, she was close on eighty years old.

And then the old foreman, Ola Langmo, comes in, and all fall silent. Those who should have been at work make themselves small, but he says nothing—something has happened here that makes all else of small account. Ola Langmo looks like Moses, he is big and heavy, bald, and with a gray beard spreading all over his breast. When he walks it's as though the house itself moved a little. He has been here these fifty years, too, and is like a father to them all. It is not easy for a modern agriculturist like the bailiff to have to work with such a big slow-coach, who barely listens to the new notions, and then goes and carries them out in his own way. He had even been known to defy the old mistress when she was too unreasonable—he would sooner face the hail-storm that followed, than give way. He stopped taking his meals at the big house when the newfangled cooking began; he had no faith in food that was not cooked over a Christian fire; and with him went the cottagers—they always followed in his footsteps. All the same, he was alone in refusing to have electric light in his little cottage; he could have had it for nothing, but he had lit and put out an oil lamp all his life, and he was bound to do the same till his dying day. He thought the great outhouses were spoiled, now that you could no longer find a dark corner either in byre or stable—all this dazzling light frightened away

the things that live and stir in the darkness, and that, in their own way, bring a blessing to a farm.

And now they all begin to question him: how does he think things will be after to-day? They ask rather breathlessly, gazing anxiously at him as they await his answer. Will the farm and the estate be divided up among the heirs, or will the whole be put up to auction? And what will happen to all of them? It is true there are the two foster-children, a boy and a girl, but is it certain that they will get everything? Is it true that Louise will get the money and Lorentz the estate as it stands? But Ola Langmo has an absent-minded look—he seats himself in the high-seat at the top of the long table where his place has been for so many years, leans his elbows on the table and his chin in his hands and sighs. Then he shakes his head and shuts his eyes. He knows nothing; at any rate he is not the man to talk about things that ought to be kept quiet.

The cook says, swaying her body a little, "I wonder whether the burial will be Christian-like?" The words sound like a groan; it must be a serious matter.

"Aye, true it is she was always at loggerheads with the pastor," says someone.

"The pastor is not Our Lord, I hope," says the foreman, opening his eyes. He looks at the cook, and she at him. They forget that others have their eyes upon them, and go on gazing at one another. It is clear that this is something these two are at odds about; some-

thing, perhaps, that has been a bone of contention between them these many years.

Then the door to the dining-room opens, and a white-haired woman in a long, white sleeved-apron steps in. She brings with her an air as of something just newly washed and spotlessly clean; everything about her is so white, her face and dress and hands, even the hairs that grow like the beginnings of a beard on her cheeks and chin. But her eyes are large and dark, and seem full of a dim sorrow. It is the housekeeper, Fröken Norberg. She must be more than seventy, though she walks so upright and has so few wrinkles; no one but Ola Langmo remembers the time when she came here; it was just after the master died. Squire Alme had been given to drink; maybe by rights it was he and Fröken Norberg who should have come together, but she was very poor and he needed to make a rich match. And so Fröken Norberg stayed single; and when he died, and things at Bruseth were not in a good way, the pale woman came and proffered service. Fru Margaret gazed at her for a while, and ended by accepting her offer with thanks. They never spoke of the dead man, but Ola Langmo had his own notions as to what this quiet woman had had to put up with as the years went by. She took it as her cross, no doubt, bowed her head and did her duty, and to many she seemed the good angel of the house. Sometimes the farm folk heard the sounds of a muffled psalm-tune from her room, but

only, to be sure, when the mistress herself was from home.

Now she gave the cook a quiet order, and the old woman at length got up.

Ola Langmo opened his eyes again and said: "They are asking whether there will be a Christian burial. But what I'm saying is that for all the mistress didn't go to church, she . . . she might quite well be a Christian all the same. The greatest thing, I say . . ." He got no further. It is not so easy always to find the right words.

"The greatest thing?" repeated the white-haired woman, and her face lightened a little. "Aye, so you are pondering what the greatest thing is, Ola?"

"Aye, for I suppose there is something that's greater than everything else," the old man ventured, and looked questioningly at her. It was a moment when deep talk was fitting.

She stood as if in a dream. "Yes," she said at last—"perhaps there is something that is greatest of all. You may be right about that."

"For example?" Ola pressed her: there was a pause, and she felt that all eyes were upon her.

"For example, well . . . if of your own free will you serve the one who has hurt you most." Then she opened her eyes, terrified at having said too much, turned abruptly and hastened back into the dining-room. The door closed behind her ever so softly.

All gazed at the foreman now, as though they looked

for an explanation; there must be something behind all this. But Ola had shut his eyes again with a little smile, and paid no heed.

"There's the young lady!" said someone, looking out of the window.

A tall young woman in a blue cloak and straw hat had come out from the main entrance, and at the same time a boy had brought a horse and trap to the steps. The girl drew on her driving gloves. Her face was fresh, reddish without being sunburnt; her eyebrows were broad and dark, her brown hair gathered in a knot low upon her neck. She smiled at the boy, though her eyes were swollen with weeping. "Thanks," she said, and stepped in, took the whip and reins, and drove off, while a gray Finland dog darted ahead, mad with joy at being allowed to go with her. "She'll be fetching her brother from the station," they said in the kitchen.

II

THE lady of Bruseth was childless, and everyone knew that this had been a great sorrow to her. The fact that her husband drank and came near to ruining everything—that she had been able to get over and set right. That he was in love with another woman, and had married her only for the sake of the money, she had found out later, but this too she had swallowed, and let no one suspect she knew it. But that the Lord would not trust her with children, while he strewed them so plentifully in the cottages round about—*that* she reckoned against Him, and would not forgive. She had need of children, she longed for little arms about her neck; but the years went by, and the day came when to hope any more was foolishness. And she grew old and bitter, and began to worship money, and power over those who had what she lacked.

But then came the time when she adopted two little ones, a boy and a girl, children of a brother's daughter. Their father, an engineer called Holm, had at one time been a man of great mark and well-to-do, but sickness and heavy losses had brought him down to the depths of poverty. He was settled now in a hill-dale, trying to keep life in himself and his wife as a small-holder and village blacksmith. The lady of Bruseth had never

liked him, and she had foretold that ill would come of it, when her niece went and threw herself away on this stranger. But, all the same, blood is thicker than water, and they got her mixed up in their affairs, so that one fine day she had found herself a loser both in money and in reputation on their account. But that was the end of it for her. They had made their bed and they must lie on it. The two little children were another matter though; they were not to blame, they were her flesh and blood, and they must not be left to be swamped in their parents' misery. So she took them. She made one condition only: they must be hers. Their parents must not visit them, there must be no letter-writing, in season or out of season—no writing whatsoever. The two little ones should find a mother in her, and so they would not need another. How the real parents might feel about this was nothing to her—they ought certainly to be glad of it.

The lady of Bruseth was over sixty when she took the two little ones into the house. And now she was to set to work to bring up children! And she would win them for herself completely, so that they should forget their real mother and father. The girl was five years old, the boy was three. Now it is easy enough to rule over grown-up people, if one has money and power and a head screwed on the right way; it is another matter with two little children. In their company she would often feel like a cracked instrument which will no longer give out the tones that belong to it. What no one

else had been able to do, these two did—they made her helpless, humble; and at the same time they roused in her instincts which had found no outlet before. At last she had children; new, unaccustomed feelings flamed up in her. But the thought that another woman had a claim on them made her quite furious. True, this woman was her niece, and many, many miles away; and yet—suppose she were to come and say: "The children are mine. Give them to me." It was as though something precious within her were constantly threatened by some danger.

Could any one have imagined the lady of Bruseth with a little one on each knee, listening while she told fairy-tales? But that is what happened in the nursery when no one was by. Her voice was no soprano, maybe, but she sang them the songs she remembered from her own childhood. There was not a night when she did not get up and go in to see that they had not thrown off the bedclothes. Could anyone have imagined that she was able to shed tears? Yet that was what happened when one of them was sick; she would watch by them night after night, and God have mercy on the doctor if he were not ready to come on the instant.

They brought a streak of tenderness into her life. They taught her to see one thing and another with new eyes—with children's or fancy's eyes. To go with her—one clinging to each hand—round stable or byre, sheepfold or hen-house, was an adventure for them, and it came to be one for her too. The birth of a foal or

the hatching of some chickens was an everyday affair for grown-up folk, of course; but for these two they were great events, and so they became great for her too. It was as though her heart, hardened by brutal reality, had caught sight for the first time of a world in which she could trust. She would stand with them, perhaps, at the window of an evening, looking out over the lake and the country beyond, and she forgot now that the farmer on this or that homestead owed her money; for to the little ones the farms, the forests, the lights that began to twinkle in the dusk over there, the red clouds that lit up the fairyland above the far-off blue mountains, all these made a world of dreams and fancies into which they gazed, and which she, standing there by them, tried to share with them.

And for these two the lady of Bruseth began to gaze out into the future, and it shaped itself in her mind into a new and better life for herself. She was no beauty certainly—these two should be. She was of a coarse metal—they should be of finer. It was in her to be bad—these two should be good. She had not traveled and learned as much as she ought—they should travel and have all the learning that she lacked. She would lie half the night imagining a brilliant life for both boy and girl.

But at first they would talk now and then of mother and father, and wanted to go home; and every time they did it, she felt a cold shudder. To deal with this she needed a stock of patience that she had not, a wariness that was not in her nature. It was bad enough

when their mother wrote and begged to be allowed to see them once again—but she could answer with harsh words. It was worse when the children themselves began to pine. They must be cured of that. And she did not stint them in playthings. Each was given a pony, and now the boy was always in the stable with his, and the girl was hard at work sewing a saddle-cloth for hers. This took them up for a time. But then their homesickness came back; it was nothing but "mother and father" all the time; they grew pale and would not eat. These were bad days for her who was fighting for one thing only—to win them wholly for herself. To humor them she let them write long letters to mother, but the letters were never sent. Then one day she was driven to the worst shift of all—but needs must, and war is war; she began to hint that there was something wrong with their father and mother. What was it? Oh, they were not big enough to understand it yet, but it was something very bad, and she had saved them from being mixed up with it. It was wicked, this; she felt as though she were soiling something that was sacred in the two children—yes, it hurt her. But she, too, was fighting for what had grown dear and sacred to her. And now the two little ones had much to ponder over; they often wandered away by themselves, trying to help one another to understand.

Little Louise was the elder; and, since their mother was not here, it was her business to look after her brother, was it not? She tried to be his providence; but

this he did not like at all. She was older, true enough, but was not he a boy and she only a girl? They built houses of stones and branches on the hillocks above the manor, and he called one The Court-house, after the house where their parents had lived; and she scolded him for that—he ought to know that their Mother here on the manor would not like it. He named his pony Musin, after the gray Galloway up at their old home, and again she felt bound to give him a talking to—suppose Mother here at Bruseth got to know of it? So began the habit she had later on of lecturing him, even when in her heart she was really at one with him. She had some little cows in their toy-byre, and she named them after cows on the farm up there in the dale, but she did not say the names out loud—not even to her brother. Their parents might be so besmirched that they felt a cold shudder at the very thought of them, but the memories of the farm where they two had had their home remained fresh and living in their hearts, though they did not venture to show it except when they were alone.

And so time passed, and they took root here. They made friends among the servants and the cotters; they couldn't help getting on well with the housekeeper, though they knew she was scolded for it. They romped about in the fields and meadows, found new playmates among the neighbors, and had their minds filled with new and rich impressions. And little by little their real mother and father grew misty and faded away.

It was a great day for the lady of Bruseth when they called her mother. They actually began to run to her when there was anything the matter, they climbed upon her lap, they threw their arms about her neck. But could she be quite easy for all that? She found herself standing over them of nights with a candle, to see whether they had been crying in their sleep. She was jealous even of their dreams.

They had a tutor for a time, but the day came at length when they were driven in the pony-cart down to the grammar school in the little town, and, late in the afternoon, the same pony-cart brought them home.

The lady of Bruseth began to breathe freely at last. For years their real parents had given no sign of life. She who fought and strove with all and sundry in her daily business, gained new strength from the hours spent with the little ones. It was a real holy day to sit of an afternoon with the little pigtailed maid at her feet, and to teach her sewing. And the dainty little creature with the broad, dark eyebrows tripped about with her out and in, learning to look at many a thing with her new mother's eyes. The girl seemed to draw sense and a feeling for reality from every answer the old woman made to her questioning. Her mind grew strong and vigorous; it was as though it grew and unfolded in kinship with the forest, the farm, and the farm-business. And the lady of Bruseth realized one day that she herself had grown to be for the child the perfect pattern, which she tried to form herself on in

all things. Aye, aye! things might have turned out worse!

It was different with the boy. At one moment he was a thorough little imp, who ran about among them all, teased everyone, and was forgiven by one and all, even by her. And the next moment he would turn grave, and wander about by himself, humming softly, and seeming to talk with unseen beings. In this flaxen head with the big, wondering eyes there lurked things deeply hidden. Had she said or done something wrong, that he could not forget, and that was working in the back of his mind? She would see the fat dairymaid come carrying a milk pail in either hand, and see him fling his arms about her and make her spill the milk, and then he would roll upon the ground with laughter because he had got her to scold and swear. Well! a bit of wildness did no harm. While he was still a small boy he took to going long rambles by himself, coming back with his pockets full of snails, and his hat full of all manner of flowers that he would lecture them about. The lady of Bruseth cared about hay, but not about flowers. He came one day and hid his head in her lap, inconsolable because a wild cherry that grew in the horse-paddock had been cut down. Close by it stood a young birch; the trees had been man and wife, and now the birch was left there a lonely widow. Fanciful stuff and nonsense, a heritage from his idiot of a father! Well, she would have to knock sense into him. But do you think she could? While Louise helped her to look after eggs

and chickens, and soon could talk over prices with her, he ran about the farm keeping count of all the wild birds that had their nests upon the place.

He came home from school one day and told how he had set up a political club among his comrades. "Oh, indeed—and who is chairman?" "I am." "And I suppose the first thing on your program is that you are all to have a thrashing?" "No, it is that we are all going to be radicals." "And what if I were to give you a radical thrashing now?" "I would have my revenge." "How?" "Oh, we elected you next chairman after I retire." How could she keep a grave face?

And look at the wily Louise—was she not always there trying to shield him when he had done anything wrong? Every now and again there would come complaints from the school, and when he was called in to answer for his sins, the girl was always at his heels and spoke first. "It was someone else who did it, Mother." "That may be, but I dare say Lorentz was not so very far away?" "No, he took it upon himself to get the other boy off." The old woman would turn to the boy. "Is that true?" "No," he would say, "Louise's always talking nonsense."

Louise had no easy time of it. She would take him in hand, of course, when they were alone, and sometimes she even thumped him; but a day came when he had grown so big that he thumped her in return. And from that time on she had to try persuasion—but what can one do by only talking?

They stood up for one another against outsiders, but between themselves they were always by way of looking down on each other. All the same, when Lorentz was away from home, Louise went about as if she were looking for him all the time. And when the girl was sick for a day, the boy went round with a curious catch in his throat, assuring everyone there was nothing to worry about, Louise would be all right again next day.

Of course the lady of Bruseth had made a picture in her head of what the boy was to be when he grew up. It was nothing over-modest; he was to be a great gentleman of some sort, a grand seigneur, maybe a minister or general—anyhow, something a cut above everybody else. But more and more often she had to ask herself: had he really the stuff in him? He was more at home among the work-folk than in the parlor. There were so many thrilling things he had read and must tell them about. Another inheritance from his father, the man of the people. But one day, when he was a half-grown lad, she saw him fly at a farm hand because a horse had been over-driven. Good! a boy should have spunk; he would do; he showed he had good blood in him. The old woman smiled and nodded. But for money he had no sense at all; all his pocket-money went to his companions. That, in her eyes, was the worst thing about him. There had been one spendthrift on the place already, and they had no use for another.

When he was a boy of not more than twelve years old, he asked at table one day, "Mother, what does a

captain do when he is old?" "He retires on a pension." "Will Peer, the ditcher, get a pension too?" "No, he will have to see and save some money while he can, or the workhouse will look after him." "Won't the workhouse look after the captain then?" "Oh, you surely know that people are different." "Why are people different?" "Be quiet, you silly boy, and sit properly at table."

The lady of Bruseth would lie awake at night and sigh: "It is no use, however much you may struggle—he will go the way he must, and not the way he should." It was hard. She had not laid her account with this.

And then again he would come into the room full of fun and with a thousand amusing things to tell, till she seemed fairly to bask in summer sunshine and began to glow herself. Was he not her son—could she help forgiving him?

But, as for Louise, she grew handsomer day by day, so everybody thought, and anyone who wanted really to make the old lady purr, had only to say that the young girl was like her.

Brother and sister graduated from school the same year, and Lorentz asked if he couldn't go to a technical school. "Oho! I suppose you would like to train yourself for a beggar, like—like the man in the dale up yonder." The upshot was that he went to an agricultural school, and everyone, he himself included, understood that the lady of Bruseth had her own reasons for sending him there.

But when his course was finished, he was not allowed to set to work on the farm yet. "I suppose those thick-heads at the university must have something or other to teach," she said. And so he was sent to the capital to study political economy.

It was worse to have to send Louise away. She had grown to be indispensable; she had a real turn for business, for money dealings, and for documents. If the young woman taught the old one to look at some things with milder eyes, the old woman taught the girl to take harder views than she would have done otherwise. But the day came when she felt forced to say: "You mustn't stay on here and grow mannish like me. Off you go, but don't stay away too long!"

That meant London, and Paris and Rome—for two long winters, through which the old woman worked early and late to make the time pass. The housekeeper kept to the kitchen and her room for the most part. Only Prahl, the lawyer from down in the town, looked in from time to time. He was a connection and her legal adviser, but he looked upon the young people in the house with no favorable eye. Suppose she were to cheat all her heirs by adopting these two some fine day?

One evening he brought the Socialist paper published in the little town, and spread it carefully before her, pointing to a passage. "What is it?" She put her reading glasses on. "Read it yourself," said he. There was something there about Lorentz. He was making

speeches at workmen's demonstrations down in the capital. He was one of the students who were preaching revolution. The old woman crumpled up the paper and swore that it was all lies. The lawyer smiled.

She wrote the boy a letter that breathed fire and brimstone. There was no mercy this time. And the boy must have had one of his bad fits on, for he answered defiantly, though he smoothed it over with his usual flippancy. "Of course, Mother, you may be quite sure that we'll make you first president of the new commonwealth."

The impudent puppy—he had better look out for himself.

Then one day finds her standing on the steps in her best dress, with a lace cap on her thin gray hair, and a white, newly ironed collar over her violet dress. Her gold spectacles sparkle in the sun. And now a carriage drives up, and out of it jumps a slim, up-to-date young lady, who flies up the steps and flings herself upon the other's neck. The old arms pressed the young girl close, and a sob broke out. "Lord bless us, my child, how I've waited for you." And off the spectacles must come that she may wipe her eyes.

"Are you walking with a stick, Mother?" "Oh, yes! I daresay it won't be long before I need two. But that bag of yours with the bright fittings—that's mighty grand." "It was given me by a friend—an Italian." The old lady opened her eyes wide, and looked at the young one's hands. Louise hid them behind her

back. "Yes, Mother, I'm engaged." But when she saw the effect of her words, she held out both hands again—and there was no ring on them! "You frightened me—aye, that you did," and the old woman shook her fist at her, and breathed freely again.

But in the big room inside, the lady from the great world had to stand in the middle of the floor so that the old woman might circle round her. The old face shone. The stick went tap, tap, on the floor. The tall figure had grown heavier, the back more bent, the feet seemed to have spread, so that her shoes looked like paddles. Each step was an effort, but to-day this was unheeded. Could she ever feast her eyes full on the lady standing there? Was it true, too, that she was like herself? She fingered the new gray traveling dress, stroked the cloth, turned her round. To be sure the girl was like her—as she once had been.

"And have you been playing the violin this last winter?" "No, not much." "No?—what have you been about? Your letters have been like telegrams." "Oh, I've been running round the galleries; but besides, I took a course of lectures at the Sorbonne." "Indeed! It's about time I heard about them. And what were they about?" "Biology." "What's that?—bio . . .?" "Well, Mother, if you want to be up-to-date, you must know a little about these things." "Hm—curious. But come now and have some tea, my child."

Tea and cakes, questions and answers on both sides—the two looked at one another, beaming. But in the

midst of it all the old woman broke off and grew serious. "And your brother—did you see anything of him?" "Yes, we met once or twice—he goes up for his examination this year, doesn't he?" "Do you know that he has gone stark staring mad?" "Oh, no, Mother, it is only a little green-sickness. He has got into some quite impossible company for a time. I was to give you his love." The other had to get up and move about, the ferrule of her stick thumping the floor again. "Aye, you always make excuses for him. But next time he comes here you'll see that he'll begin to stir up discontent among the farm hands." "Oh, Mother, you needn't worry—I'm sure he doesn't mean so badly." The old woman saw that Louise was watching her with anxious eyes, ready to take up the cudgels for her brother. But she couldn't help that. "He had better look out," she said at last. "Yes, I'm in earnest—he had better look out. I have written to him to-day again."

A few days later Louise brought her mother a fresh letter in her brother's handwriting—but she went out while it was being read. When she came in again, she saw that the old woman's face was stained with tears. "I shall write just once more," she said, and went off toward the office.

That evening, when Louise went in to her mother's bedroom to say a last good-night, she found the lady of Bruseth lying with her face hidden in both her hands. "What is the matter, Mother?" In a little the other

took her hands away and looked at the girl with despairing eyes. "It is—it is this about Lorentz. I do think I've toiled and striven and done my very best. But now I can struggle no more. I must give in now, and admit that I've lost . . ."

III

One could see that the young girl in the dog-cart was used to driving, for when she met a motor-lorry on the way down the hill, and the horse shied and reared, she did not lose her head in the least, but quieted him down with a whistle, without even tightening the reins. She drove down toward the huddled little town, where all the little houses were of wood—all but the new national school building, a monster of red brick that towered aloft from a hill in the midst and seemed to overcrow everything around it. As she rattled down through the main street, windows opened on either side and heads were stuck out. A trap from Bruseth was always something to gaze at, and most of all to-day. She knew the few people she met—at any rate they knew her, and hats flew off as she passed.

She knew there was all manner of gossip about her. Of girl friends she had almost none in the little place, and most of the young men were agreed that she was proud. But after the diphtheria epidemic of some years back, when she had gone about and served as voluntary nurse, there had come to be a sort of halo about her. And then there weren't many in these parts who could play both violin and piano, and she had been called in sometimes to play accompaniments at concerts when visiting artists performed. To-day, as usual, there was

a crowd at the station; not because anyone was expected, but because everyone had so much time on their hands, and the express from the capital was the one great diversion of the long day.

Its whistle was heard from away beyond the ridge, then it rumbled into sight along the embankment by the lake, and finally came slowly into the station. The carriage doors were thrown open and the few travelers jumped out. Louise had stayed in the dog-cart to keep the fidgety horse quiet, and now there came toward her a young man, a little over middle height, in a blue lounge-suit and light-gray felt hat. He was fair, beardless, with bushy eyebrows and flashing eyes beneath them. He carried a rain-coat on one arm, and a traveling bag in his hand. He halted suddenly as he caught sight of his sister, and threw back his head a little. Many had greeted him, but he had not noticed them; and now all eyes were fixed upon these two. The Finland dog jumped up on him as though he had great things to tell, but he shook him off. Without a word he pressed his sister's hand, took the whip and reins, seated himself at her side and started. She bent her head to hide her emotion; he seemed to have eyes for nothing but the horse as he drove off sharply. Only when they had come out of the town, and were going slowly up the hill, did he turn to her and say in a low voice: "It was very sudden."

She answered with a sigh, and was forced to pull out her handkerchief.

A little after, he went on in rather a full-toned voice, as if he were defending himself from a platform: "It was particularly hard for me. For there were several things we had to talk over."

She gazed in front of her for a while. "Your last letter—why did you write it?"

"It was in answer to hers."

"It grieved her so much, Lorentz."

"I could not go on for ever letting myself be treated like a child."

"If one is grown-up one can afford to be considerate."

She was given a lightning glance out of the corner of his eye: "I wonder when I shall be grown-up in your eyes."

"We can talk of that another time." She sighed again.

A rap on the knuckles again from the elder sister. He jumped out at the steepest part of the hill, whereupon the horse started to gallop, and he had to run hard to keep up, holding on to the trap. When they stopped to take breath, and he went to the horse's head and took it by the bridle, he said without looking at his sister, "Did she take it so much to heart?"

"You might have asked that before."

"You women sitting up here don't realize that we are going forward toward a new time. Everywhere youth is breaking out, and the grand folk with their reactionary notions will have to make the best of it."

"I see you are well pleased with yourself."

He avenged himself by answering, "We can talk of that another time."

When they reached the avenue leading up to the house, and were seated side by side again, she said, "And now it's we two who will have to arrange about the funeral."

"Oh, I'll leave that to you."

"What? To me?" She looked at him in surprise.

"Yes, you two agreed about everything—you must know best what she would like."

"Oh, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

But a little afterward he took her chin in his hand and forced her to look at him. And his face was lit up with the smile that she knew. "You know quite well we must manage to pull together," he said. "And I'm not really as bad as I sound."

The big house echoed strangely, as the brother and sister climbed the stairs to the room where the dead woman lay. Lorentz opened the door for his sister to pass before him. The blinds were down, but away in the yellow dusk they could see the tester-bed where the Widow of Bruseth lay outstretched, with her hands folded upon her breast. Her eyes were shut, her broad chin pushed forward. Upon the night table glittered her gold spectacles, as though she must have them at hand even now.

"Come here," whispered Louise. Her brother had stopped by the door, as though he would not venture to come nearer. But when at last he stood at the bedside,

something made him catch his sister's hand, and a sob came from him. There she lay, she who had been endlessly good to them both, according to her lights, and whom he had so bitterly disappointed. "Forgive me, Mother," cried a voice within him, and he felt as though he must throw himself on his knees and weep.

He smothered his tears, but he pressed his sister's hand closely. It was so incredible that she who lay there would never again open her mouth to give an order.

When at length they went out, it was with cautious steps, and they shut the door behind them noiselessly, as if she that lay within were sleeping and must not be wakened.

In the hall below stood the tall, white-haired housekeeper, paler than ever—she greeted him with outstretched hand. The brother and sister had not been allowed to have much to do with her; they were used to seeing her go about trying to seem invisible. Now she was quite taken aback when Lorentz threw his arms round her and patted her cheek.

He knew well enough that the people here on the farm liked him better than they did his sister, and he too was fond of them all. After he had supped with the two women, he felt he must go out into the kitchen to say how-do-you-do to the cook and the dairymaid; they were always glad when he came, but to-day they saw that his eyes were red, and their faces fell in sympathy.

Later he went out to say good-day, to the bailiff and the forester by the way, but more especially to his old friends among the cottagers and farm laborers. Outside in the farm-place Ola Langmo came toward him slowly and heavily; his great beard had grown gray; he laid his broad, hairy paw upon the young man's shoulder and said "Aye, aye! my boy, so things go." The old man had been like a father to him too; who else in his boyhood had been so sure a friend and refuge in trouble? Lorentz felt that everyone was looking at him now and thinking: "There goes the new master"; and he himself had good reason to think the same. But it was a strange feeling. North of the farm-offices, small separate dwellings had been built lately for the bailiff, the forester, and the smith—it was he who had put this through—and now he looked in, to have a chat with the wives, and give the children, big and little, the sweets he had brought for them. Everywhere he felt eyes on him, asking, "How will things go with us from to-day?" And his own eyes answered, "They won't go any worse."

But this day's experience was a strange one. Only yesterday he had been at a noisy strike-meeting in the capital, where, among comrades of his own age, he had been as zealous as any in hurling scorn and contempt at the accursed capitalist. That was yesterday. And here he stands to-day, perhaps one of the biggest capitalists in the country. Was it not ludicrous? The thing took him, as it were, by the throat and de-

manded, "Well, what are you going to do about it?" Of course, he might stand forth and declare that he would not accept his heritage, or he might divide the whole property among the workmen and tenants. But the thing was that his heart was set on the inheritance. For many years he had looked forward to the moment when he should stand there, owner and master of Bruseth. But to-day it seemed to him as if the whole manor, the people and the country all around, stared at him and burst out laughing.

He wandered about, looking at everything with unseeing eyes; feeling the very ground beneath his feet insecure; till at last he found himself standing bareheaded among the fields to the northward, and here he sat down on a stone, leaned his chin upon his hands and gazed in front of him.

No indeed, it's no such simple matter to be young. Life in its manifold forms rolls in on you, your mind is open and defenseless, all things sweep in, all things capture you in turn. He had grown up in this broad, teeming country-side, under these endlessly wide skies, and perhaps it was this that had given him a spirit so wildly glad, so ready for earnest and for play, for defiance, for combat, above all so keen to throw itself into any rash adventure. All values shift and change so quickly in a mind where many currents meet and eddy: one day you will find there a troubadour and song and chivalry; the next, a Napoleon and the cult of the superman; the third, a workman and equality

for all. He will sleep of nights with a handkerchief tied tight over his head to keep his hair smoothly parted, and by day will be raving against the upper classes. There are things so glorious they make one feel like playing leap-frog with the whole of humanity, others so terrible one feels ready to rage, or to weep, or to kill. Here on the farm no one had time to study such conflicts as these in a boy's mind; he would only get a cuff on the head, which he could take as a joke, indeed, but which sometimes struck home. Be quiet, boy! But keeping quiet is like covering up a powder-mine; it lies there waiting, smoldering, and one fine day it explodes. A time came when his whole being seemed to listen for something from the great world outside. Not for war and great events; no, but for a new spirit which he felt was on the march, and with which all his faculties seemed to beat in unison. What was it? How should he know? A day of judgment, a new dawn? He felt that it would mean the freeing of something pent up within him: but when would it come? He was sent to the agricultural college; so far good; he was interested in that sort of thing, but it was not enough. He went to the university, and that too was good; political economy interested him keenly, but neither was that enough. The broad landscape in his mind, the wild gladness, the new spirit in the air—something more he must have.

And then it came. The free life in a circle of comrades, wide awake like him, full of boisterous gladness

like him, listening eagerly like him for what was new. An atmosphere of daredevilry and idealism which at one and the same time might rage and weep and kill. The mine exploded. Free! He knew well enough what he staked, but there was a spice of daredevilry in that too. To take risks was the very thing he wanted; to be free in this as well; to defy heaven and earth, to be young in earnest—it was like the glorious intoxication of riding a wild young horse.

But sometimes after the intoxication would come the morning headache. The country youth, bred on a big farm in a spacious country-side, would come uppermost and grin a little.

When these student comrades of his went on the rampage, it was always with the air of being out to save the world. They were jolly enough, in fact, these boys; but the burden of their song was that they must pity themselves deeply for having grown up in tragic times. They had found a world of blood and ruins, a world without ideals; were they not bound, then, to revolt? Youth asked for nothing less than a new social system, and as it could not think out anything for itself, it borrowed a model of Karl Marx. Now the industrial worker became a veritable Messiah; these young students suddenly became experts in the economy of industry—they went so far as to dub themselves "workers." "We proletarians," said the merchant's son, who wore patent leather boots and found chocolate at his bedside when he awoke of a morning.

Oh yes! Lorentz had to turn aside sometimes to laugh a little.

And yet—he belonged among them. Here was an outlet for the explosive within him, for his defiance, for the craving to set his shoulder to a mad world and overturn it. A great city infects one with a spirit of its own; in it the world puts on a new aspect—for Lorentz an ugly face. The tumult, the smoke, the smell, the hurly-burly of motors, the slums, the houses of the rich—one man drinking champagne while another has not milk to give his child—all this raises problems that take one by the throat day by day. He never went himself to the poor working quarters—oh no! But he read in books and papers about factory slaves, thereby filling his soul with great emotions and great visions. Neither he nor his companions ever took a job as sick-watchers—oh no! their compassion spent itself in hate of an indefinite something that they called capitalist society. They helped the poor by trouncing and denouncing the rich—thereby freeing themselves from all responsibility. The band had its leader—a cool head, a logician, a master of dialectic. When his eyes rested on them they felt that he was a man to obey. "Everything must go into the melting-pot," he would say. "Our feelings too. Love of father and mother is in essence a spiritual slavery like another. Free yourselves in this sphere too. Family affection, like the appendix, is a rudiment from the simian age. And now I'll put you a question, Lorentz: If you had

to choose—if you had to choose between a little violence to your parents, and letting yourself be bullied and cowed by them—which would you choose?" Lorentz considers; practically speaking he has no parents; but he says nothing. Whereupon another, bolder, more daring, more devil-may-care than any of them, answers: "I can say: I would use my revolver even if it were against my own mother."

"You'll come to something yet," says the leader. "It is men like you we need in the new world."

And now Lorentz sits here with bowed head. He has come home; and up here the world puts on a new face once more. Other powers call upon him. Every time he has come up here on a visit it has seemed as if farm and landscape fixed their eyes on him and asked: what is all this you have muddled yourself up in? You who feel your roots in the soil; you who are one day to be master here? A strange feeling of shame had come over him. He, who was so fond of his foster-mother, had brought her nothing but grief and trouble. How reconcile it all? How is it that such discordant forces can jostle one another in a single mind? Till now he had comforted himself with the thought that some day out of this turbid chaos a new world would arise, perfected and clear, wherein all antagonism would be resolved into a great, strong, rational whole. Was this what it meant to be grown up?

But in the meantime Mother Alme goes and dies.

No, being young is no such simple matter.

IV

Later on in the day he wandered away along the ridge by a disused farm road, where the grass grew between the cart-tracks. Aspens rustled on either side; and over the lake and country-side great rain squalls were sweeping—he greeted them with a nod: "I have seen *you* before." Strange how one feels at home in a wide landscape; everything calls to one, everything wakes memories; aye, everything seems a part of one's own self. Half a dozen miles northward by the lake the cellulose factory lifts its chimneys toward the sky, and here a strip of sunlight breaks through the clouds and touches a farmstead and a green slope with gold. Good-day, it says to him. He turns and looks southward; as far away on that side is the end of the lake, with the intake of the river, lightly spanned by the railway bridge. Good-day, it too says. But yet farther to the south a rainbow bends its huge arch over forest and plain. The whole wide prospect under the driving clouds is full of manifold, changing light. He can see for leagues all round him. This is his childhood's world; and now that he is back again, he seems to take possession of it all and to grow one with it. The air here comes filtered by its journey through many forests; he draws deep breaths, as if to cleanse his lungs of

the city; about him is the smell of leaves, of mold, of dung, of a hundred familiar things; it is as though he were breathing in all he can see in all the wide countryside around him.

He walks along whistling softly, hands in pockets, his shoulders swaying; he stops, walks on, stops again. Strange that you cannot talk to others—no, not even to your own sister—of the things that are near your heart. They used to laugh at him when, as a half-grown boy, he would sit out here lost in dreams. Louise and he, indeed, would sometimes stand together on the hillside trying which of them could tell most flowers in field and meadow by their scent, or who knew most names of the farms, woods, and mountains far and near. Further she could not follow him. But for him a church spire pointing to the skies from a headland far south at the end of the lake grew to be a playmate with whom he talked, as it stood there on a Sunday, its bell chiming, chiming. Right across the lake, on a far-away hill, lay a little, red-painted homestead, whose windows used to burn like fire in the sunset light—he had no notion who lived there, but he peopled it with men and women, gave them names and made them his friends. And there were hundreds of such homesteads north and south, on both sides of the lake, and the sky above all was so endlessly wide and high, his own soul seemed to expand so as to embrace it all, to breathe and live as part of it.

Aye, this landscape and his own soul! The forests,

the farms, the hills seemed to blend together into a something which gave birth within him not only to memories, but to thoughts as well; nay, it often seemed to him that the landscape lay there with a soul of its own, unfathomable, teeming, manifold, and ever-changing, but always with a power that flowed to meet him everywhere, bearing precious gifts.

It was never the same. It changed its mood like the mind of man, according as the heavens shadowed it with cloud or bathed it in light. It moaned in wind, it laughed in sunshine, it wept in rain, it raged in the snow-storm, it lay there giving birth to mighty forces, good and evil. The more one gazed at it, the more it had to tell. All that man had at last come to know, as a painfully spelled-out lesson, it had lived through long since; and by means of the changing seasons it showed forth in picture-writing—not only life and death, but resurrection as well. God alone knew whether it had not breathed into man his first holy dreams; did it not lie there on moonlit evenings after rain, trying to reflect heaven itself?

He remembered autumn evenings when he had had strange experiences as he sat out there alone. He had seen, maybe, the day fade out into blue night, and ridge billowing behind ridge till the whole toned away into a faintly red horizon. And, when the unrest of day had died away, he would begin involuntarily to listen for a new sound, that stole out of the very evening, and swayed, and rose and fell as if it were the rhythmic

music of the landscape itself—the organ notes of the hills, swelling and dying, the song of the forests and the settled lands. If he shut his eyes he could feel the same rhythmic motion within him, until he forgot that he and all around him were not one. Now light after light would gleam forth from the many scattered farmsteads, and light after light would be kindled in him too. Far north, by the lake shore, a light shines from a little cottage—perhaps an old man lies dying there, perhaps a child is being born into the world; and in him too something dies and is born. He feels the ages coming and going, mounting and sinking—as ridge swells and sinks behind ridge; the landscape brings forth a generation and then swallows it up; and new ones follow and are wiped out again and ever again. In itself it never changes, it has seen millions of years go by, and it is of these it now sings. Lights have come out in the vault above too, but the lighted windows on earth and the stars in heaven are long acquainted—a lamp burnt out in a cottage down here, a sun blown out and vanished up yonder, it is all a matter of a few autumn evenings more or less. The landscape sings of all this, and his heart swells, and sings the same song. It sets free the feeling of the eternal within him, and his soul seems to spread itself brooding over all the ages and over infinite space itself.

As he wanders about here once more, he is met by the same sights and emotions; he stops, walks on,

stops again, seats himself at last, and falls into a dream. It is as though this landscape has grown to be his conscience, as if he has sinned against it; it lies there at war with thoughts sprung from a Ghetto; it knows only those who have their roots and their home up here; it demands sun and rain and work. But is that all? No, it tells him he has wasted his time till now on fitful, fruitless attempts, that the good that is in him has not yet taken shape—and when will it? Within him all is chaos still, life in the making, an exuberance whose bursting power he cannot control and turn to useful ends; it only makes him giddy and overstrained—he could shout, or rage or roll upon the ground and weep.

On the way back he sees Louise hastening toward him, her hands thrust deep into the pockets of a buttoned-up ulster; in her hurry she has pulled on her riding boots so as to be able to wade if need be. As they draw near each other, it seems as though Lorentz comes back to consciousness of ordinary things; he becomes an everyday human being again, for here is common sense coming to meet him. The wind is blowing locks of hair about her fresh-colored face; and now she smiles, and calls out that he must make haste and come home.

As they walked back side by side, she told him of an important decision that must be taken. A merchant in the city, who had bought a lot of timber last winter on a three months' bill, had written to-day that he could

not take it up, and begged that the acceptance might be renewed. But Louise said she was not much inclined to do this.

"Well, who is it that has authority to settle such matters now?" he asked

"I suppose we shall find that out in a day or two," she replied, giving him a side glance. "Lately, though, I have been empowered to sign."

He stopped suddenly. "What? Have you a power of attorney, my dear?"

"It's something of the sort they call it, I believe. Perhaps Mother had a feeling that something might happen to her; and you were not at home. But now that you are here, of course I shall leave everything to you."

"Well, well—so you are in command here now?" he said teasingly, looking at her with narrowed eyes.

"King for a day, if so. But what do you think about this business?"

"Suppose the merchant goes to smash if we say no?"

"Perhaps that would be the best thing. We know him of old." She thought and spoke exactly like the widow of Bruseth.

But Lorentz too was a different person here from what he was down in the town. A business has its own laws—he must not begin by risking losses.

"Well, you know most about these things; we had better do what you think fit."

The next days were a busy time for them both. The funeral brought people from as far away as the capi-

tal; for three days, as was the custom in these parts, the feasting went on, and there were many eulogies of the dead woman, both at the grave-side and in the newspapers, big and little.

At length the last guests were gone, and the brother and sister left alone in the great rooms. The housekeeper went about her duties as usual, and as usual made as if she were invisible. When evening ended her day, she disappeared up to her room, where she sat reading sermons, or crocheting and sewing for heathen children far away in distant lands.

It takes time to accustom oneself to the thought that the one who has guided everything and ruled over all is gone for ever. Everyone treated Lorentz as the master, but it was Louise who knew about everything, and it was to her that he, too, had to turn; and so it ended by the others passing him by, thinking they might as well go straight to her. But he had no mind whatever to play the servant under his sister; he buckled to, swearing within himself that he would soon have it all at his finger ends, and indeed he was out and about the work early and late. No one should be able to say that he had let things down—the business should assuredly not suffer in his hands. He had his own ideas both about the farming, which was out of date, and about the forests, which needed to be looked after better than they had been.

In particular, he had plans of his own for starting horse-breeding on a large scale. A couple of years be-

fore, the mistress of Bruseth herself had made him a present of a thoroughbred filly, bought at Hamar, and now the filly had grown into a beautiful young mare, dapple-gray, with a fine head and big, wondering eyes. He called her "Lady," and though she was still restive when the bridle was put on, what a joy it was to swing oneself upon her back and let her have her head. When they came in again both man and filly were out of breath and bathed in sweat.

Louise was busy in the office one day when he appeared in his shirt-sleeves and blue overalls; he had been down in the fields helping to harrow the weeds.

"Excuse my not knocking," he said.

"Idiot," she answered, without looking up; she was doing sums on a piece of paper.

"You look just right, my girl, sitting in Mother's chair. There's no doubt that you are like her."

"Don't bother me now. Don't you see I'm doing sums?"

He stood still, looking at her as she sat there with her dark head bowed over the desk. The parting that divided her hair from forehead to crown was so white, her eyebrows so broad and dark, on her straight nose just a hint of freckles. When she raised her eyelids with their long lashes, her glance was full of light. A young, innocent girl, who played piano and violin and sent merchants into bankruptcy. In her head he supposed there was scarcely an aimless thought, far less a dream. Her youth had blossomed in the shelter of the lady of

Bruseth; she was friendly to all, and distrusted all; she talked of farming, forests, and prices as if they were poetry; her eyes sparkled when the farm accounts showed a surplus. But had a man ever come into her life? No one knows less of that than a brother.

"It's right," she exclaimed, leaning back and smiling at him.

"Listen now, Loo—do you know any more than I of how matters stand? Some decision or other must have been come to about what Mother has left."

She half closed her eyes, still smiling. "You Communists are in such a hurry to lay hands on other people's property."

"You said something the other day about there perhaps being an auction?"

"You are so impatient, my dear. However, I can tell you so much: Mother left a will, and it is in her lawyer, Prahl's, hands. But I daresay you agree with me that it wouldn't look well if either you or I began to worry him? He will have to show up at his own good time. He may come any day. And I fancy I know who will be master here then."

He was silent for a while. She seemed to be busy with some papers. Then she heard him say: "Well, Loo, if it should be me, of course you will stay on here just as before? You must stay here and help me. You are not thinking of anything else, are you?"

"Oh, you'll marry, and then I shall only be in the way."

"Do speak seriously. I am sure you have thought out some sort of plan."

She looked out of the window for a moment. "Well, yes, perhaps I have. But I doubt very much whether I shall stay on here."

"Oh! That's plain speaking."

"For, to be honest—either you will run Bruseth on Communistic lines (and I won't stay here to see it) . . ."

"Nonsense," he broke in. "It doesn't follow, because one has a few ideas, that they are to be carried out overnight."

"Or it will turn out that you only believed in Communism for others, and that all is changed as soon as you are a capitalist yourself. If it has gone no deeper, then I understand still less why you could not have had a little consideration for Mother."

"Many thanks!" he said bitterly, throwing back his head and making a dart toward the door.

"Don't run away, you stupid! Don't you think we can wait a little, before fighting about what Mother has left behind? The earth has scarcely closed over her; and besides, I am sure she has provided for both you and me."

Another rap over the knuckles from her, the elder. How long would he have to stand it?

But the attorney, Herr Prahl, came that same afternoon.

V

He had telephoned beforehand, and Lorentz met him in the hall and helped him off with his rain-coat. The fat, asthmatic old man got his galoshes off with some difficulty—then he wiped the moisture off his long gray beard and, puffing and panting, tried to brush from his trousers some mud-splashes from his cariole-wheels. Herr Prahl was a conservative, and had once been a member of the Storthing; and now he lived in a constant state of exasperation because everything in the country was going straight to the devil. People had made unkind remarks about his dealings with the lady of Bruseth; they said that, whenever she made money, the lawyer made money too, but no one had ever heard of his losing a halfpenny when Fru Alme lost. What his feelings toward Lorentz were, it was not hard to guess; but for that matter the young man cared not a jot how the lawyer felt.

Now he stood ready with his portfolio under his arm—Lorentz opened the door for him, and together they entered the bright room with the three long windows looking out on the lake and the wide prospect. The room was so big that a thick wooden pillar, painted white, had been set in the middle of the floor to support the ceiling, and upon this pillar hung a

large portrait of the widow's husband, the late Herr Alme, a bloated, beardless magnate with big eyes and prominent chin. For the rest one hardly noticed the sofas and arm-chairs along the walls and round the tables, the floor space was so large; what one did notice was the large grand piano against the right-hand wall. Herr Prahl greeted Louise and the housekeeper respectfully, as they came to meet him. "Oh aye," he sighed, as he looked round, "it is always a pleasure to enter these halls, but—there is one we miss." He sighed.

This, of course, was not a place where business was discussed—he was led, through a smaller room with green plush-covered furniture, into the mistress's private office, where he had sat so often helping to settle weighty affairs. The housekeeper followed the others to the threshold of the hall, then she turned, and stood unnoticed in the middle of the great room, gazing after the brother and sister as they went in to meet their fate.

Soon all three were sitting round a little table; the lawyer polished his gold eye-glasses, fitted them on his nose; then a document emerged from his portfolio; but before he entered on the matter in hand he felt it necessary to pull out a big handkerchief and blow his nose with the utmost vigor.

Well—as he had said over the telephone, he had come to inform them of Fru Alme's last wishes. There had been another will originally, but some fourteen

days before she passed away she had made a new one which varied in some respects from the original.

And now he began to read.

First of all, a number of minor sums were set aside for old tenants and servants; the housekeeper, too, received her share. Then there was a bequest of fifty thousand crowns for a new hospital in the town, and an equal sum for a crematorium for the district. Now came the turn of Lorentz Alme, now a university student—the young man moved a little in his seat, and Louise hardly dared to breathe. He received thirty thousand for the completion of his education—here the lawyer made a pause and looked over his eyeglasses, while Louise bent forward, gazing open-mouthed. The pause dragged out a little too long. At last the lawyer went on reading; and now came Louise's turn. She was to have the manor of Bruseth with all rights thereto appertaining, forests, sawmill, power-house and mills, domestic animals, implements and furniture, as well as the deceased's jewelry and clothes, besides a half-million in state bonds and a hundred thousand at her credit in the bank, together with four hundred thousand in mortgages on the houses in the town. Sundry debts, unsecured by mortgages, but which might in present circumstances be considered safe, approximately balanced a loan made by the Credit Bank on the security of the Bruseth estate. Herr Prahl was appointed executor, and was to be

Louise's adviser for the next five years. There was also a provision that, in the event of her marrying, her own property must be settled on her.

That was all.

He lifted his head and looked at them, this time through his glasses.

Brother and sister sat there pale, not knowing where to look. Louise stammered: "But . . . but there must be a mistake. I cannot . . . it must be my brother."

The lawyer rose: "The purport of the will is unmistakable. These are Fru Alme's last wishes. But if there is anything that is not quite clear, I will read it once more with pleasure."

"No, but . . ." Tears had come into Louise's eyes —she looked at Lorentz as if for help.

The lawyer put the document back into his portfolio, looking at them both the while. "The question is, whether you, Fröken Alme—and you, Herr Lorentz—accept these bequests. For you must note that the matter is not one of legal inheritance—these are gifts."

"Why, of course we do," came rather hotly from Lorentz, and he made an attempt to twirl a mustache, but became aware that he had none.

"But I suppose I can do what I like with my own?" faltered Louise, looking at the lawyer beseechingly.

"With this proviso, Fröken, that during the years I have anything to say in the matter, I shall feel myself bound to act in all things according to the spirit of the

will. I am cognizant, of course, of the various reasons which weighed with Fru Alme." Here there was a brief glance over the eye-glasses toward Lorentz.

The lawyer took his leave. No, thanks! he would not take anything. But he assured Louise that he was at her service in all things, and that he would come up once or twice a week to help her to discuss matters with the forester, the bailiff, and the miller. He wrinkled into a smile as he added: "You'll see, there will be plenty of ravens about here now, and it won't be a bad thing to have an old fox at hand."

Lorentz tried to outdo his sister in calm. He offered to drive the lawyer home, but realized then that the offer was absurd, as he had seen him drive up in his own cariole. Then he went out with him, and this time helped him on with his rain-coat, and even stooped to help pull the galoshes on his clumsy feet. But when the lawyer had driven away, and he had shut the door behind him, he stood a moment in the hall leaning against the wall.

It was as though he had received a blow on the head, and the whole world was reeling about him; but on no account must anyone see it. "Why, it's nothing," he tried to say. "I don't care a straw. I must show that I'm above caring—I must go in and congratulate Louise." Yes, but could he? Of course he could.

A little later he found himself passing through the great room, but things still went on dancing round him, and he had to catch at the back of a chair. "Go on!

You are going in to wish Louise joy. Put a good face on it. Aren't you above caring? Show that you are, now."

But when he got inside and saw his sister sitting by the table, as if she had been drawn back to the spot where it had all happened, he came to a sudden halt. It seemed as if Herr Prahl was still sitting there by her side.

"Lorentz," she whispered, staring at him with a pale face.

"I congratulate you," he said, trying to laugh, but without going up to her.

"You must believe me, Lorentz. I never dreamed of this."

He laughed a little mocking laugh, without knowing why. But it barred the way to her. "What's the matter?" he asked lightly. "I do believe you are ashamed."

"Lorentz!" She held out both hands to him, but she could not get up.

And how did he come, at that very moment, to stick his hands into his pockets? He hardly knew himself that he was standing there with an icy smile.

"Do you hear, Lorentz!" she begged him. "For God's sake—you don't believe I had any inkling of this!"

He was far too bewildered still to know what he was doing. Something had crashed down on his head, and someone or other—something or other—must be to blame. Louise had risen now and stood there gaz-

ing, not daring to come nearer. Or was she getting ready to give him a rap over the knuckles again! Just let her try. Now at last, if ever, he must get the upper hand. She stood there trembling. Was she awaiting her sentence? Of course he would be magnanimous; and yet something not himself seemed to take command. It was perfectly senseless, but he heard himself say, "Will it be convenient for me to stay here overnight?"

"What?" She did not understand.

"For this is not my home any more." He clenched his fists. "I—I have been thrown downstairs with a shilling for pocket-money. But may I have quarters here for the night?"

This time she did not answer, but drew herself up as if he had struck her in the face.

Then he turned and staggered out. "Lorentz!" he heard her call—a cry of pain, and from his own sister. But he stumbled on and out.

VI

THERE was a fellow wandering aimlessly over the hills—possibly it was himself. Was he bareheaded, was it raining, was the sun shining? It was someone who had behaved pitifully to his sister that day, and he knew that it was himself; the only thing was he had not been bad enough—he would go back again soon and rush into the parlor and behave a thousand times worse. He met people who stared. Did they greet him? Did they speak to him? Aha, here came the new master, the heir to Bruseth. The world would have something to laugh at now; the hills, the lake, the sky, the forests, the whole country-side lay there shouting with mirth. Poor little man! Did it hurt? Shall we blow on it? He clenched his fists. Well, one is bound to suffer when one fights for one's convictions. And here you see a Communist mad with rage because he has not inherited a couple of millions—ho, you hills and forests, plains and lake, laugh away! Oh, oh, oh! Wait till he gets to town! But his comrades there will have heard of it all, and will laugh too. Very well, if he had not preached revolt before, he would preach it now. The world should have something to think about besides laughing. He thought of the student who was willing to point a revolver at his own mother to show

his emancipation from stupid family ties. That was spoken like a man. That's the way to treat present-day society. What harm had he done? Defended his independence, championed what he deemed the truth. Punish the fellow! Down with him! Let his sister have it all! She can wheedle a niggardly old capitalist in petticoats, she deserves to be rewarded. "Take care, Louise! I may be dangerous." At whom should he point the revolver? His mother? He had none. His sister? Oh, nonsense! The worst of it all was that he had behaved like an idiot; he had talked rubbish and ranted and raved against everyone, instead of catching *himself* by the throat! What would become of him, if that was the way he began?

He becomes aware that he is standing looking out over the forests and the open country. Farewell! Down below in a field is Ola Langmo with a horse team, harrowing— "Farewell, Ola! This is no home for me now!" He turns toward the manor. The white and red houses, the garden, where the fruit-trees have shed their blossoms, the avenue, the beautiful home that might have been his to-day. Farewell!

He stood with sunken head, and gazed down at the lake. He felt like rushing down the hillside and plunging in.

For a long time Louise wandered about the house, waiting for him to come back. The hours dragged slowly by, and he did not come. What could he be doing? The housekeeper opened the door to say that

supper was ready. Louise tried to answer quite carelessly, that her brother had gone out and that they had better wait and see if he wasn't coming back. The pale old woman stood for a moment with her eyes fixed on the girl, till Louise met her look. And then the young girl seemed to draw herself up with something about her of the lady of Bruseth. Had it been Lorentz, Fröken Norberg would have gone to him and taken him by both his hands, but Louise was different. The housekeeper let her eyes fall and went out again.

They waited an hour. When the clock struck nine, Louise said they must have their supper without him.

So the two women sat opposite one another, trying to eat as if nothing had happened. To Louise the housekeeper was the same now as in the old mistress's time, a servant in the house when one wished to be alone, a member of the family when it suited—always kept at a little distance, especially when there was anything important afoot. There she sits now, with her dark, far-off eyes, she who knows everything, has seen and understood everything all these many years, but has never been called into council, and has always kept silence. Louise began to speak eagerly of the big wash on which they soon must start. No doubt her voice shook a little; perhaps beneath it was a stifled sob, and the cry, "Where is Lorentz, what is he doing now?" But she carried it off very well. The two women talked of the big wash and discussed the work of the house,

while they tried to eat; and probably neither of them knew just what they were talking about.

But when the clock struck ten and still her brother did not come, Louise began to feel a different sort of emotion. This was going too far. If he was going to make a scandal, and she had to set the farm folk searching for him, she would feel like asking Ola Langmo's help to give the boy a thrashing.

At last his well-known step was heard in the hall; but he did not come in—he went up to his room.

"Perhaps we had better send up a tray with some food to him," suggested the housekeeper.

"I'll ask him," said Louise.

She found him lying right across his bed with his hands behind his head.

"Perhaps we had better talk this thing out," she began. "For we have both got to face it."

He growled and looked up at the ceiling.

She sat down. "In the first place, you no doubt agree with me that it is no one else's business. I have telephoned to Prahl. He will not talk."

"Hm!" Still addressing the ceiling.

"In the second place, I want to tell you, that if it had turned out as we all expected, and you had got Bruseth, I had made up my mind to join the Red Cross and learn nursing. I think it would suit me."

"I'm sure it would."

"Will you tell me now what you want me to do?"

"Have I asked you to do anything?"

"If I refused to accept this bequest, then I suppose the property would be divided up by the court, the farm and forests would fall into the hands of speculators, or the Government would turn Bruseth into a home for the aged or a lunatic asylum. And if anything could make mother turn in her grave, it would be that." She paused, looked toward the window and added: "Riches in themselves do not count for very much, especially with taxes as they are at present; and whoever is to work a business like this one will certainly have no easy time of it. But since it has been intrusted to my hands, I must do my best; and I have every hope that I shall be able to deal with it."

"I don't doubt it," still to the ceiling.

"And though, naturally, you must feel what has happened to-day as a great disappointment, Lorentz, I must tell you, all the same, that I should not have expected you to behave in this way."

At that he sprang to his feet: "Are we to have a lecture again?"

He stood there as if bristling for a fight, but she made no attempt to rise.

"Do you remember when we were little, Lo? We were such good friends, we two. And now I beg of you—help me! We *could* help one another to find a way through this."

"Thanks." He thrust his hands into his pockets and half turned away.

"Consider a little. Don't you think there are other

people who are worse off than you? You must judge for yourself whether you behaved toward Mother as you ought, but does it seem to you that she treated you so very badly? Didn't you write and preach against private property? You claimed the right to do so. But hadn't she on her side the right to do what she liked with her own? You are getting enough to let you follow out any studies you like. And afterward, as you know very well, I would gladly share all I have with you."

"And you think I would agree to that."

"At least you will agree to stay here and help your sister till we are over the worst. We can say that, when it came to the point, you chose to study, rather than to turn farmer. In the autumn you can take up whatever you like, law for instance—or what do you think?"

He turned toward her, still with his hands in his pockets. Her calmness, her wise counsels, her concern for him, were more than he could bear. Would she never treat him as grown-up?

"Aye, you have everything cut and dried, I see. But suppose I, too, have made my plans?"

"Very well—I was only giving you my own ideas."

And next moment she sees him pulling from the cupboard the suit-case he had when he came home for the funeral. He opens it and begins to get his things together and pack. She sits still, quite taken aback. She thinks at first it is a joke. Nor had Lorentz

himself a minute or two before thought of such a thing; it is merely a freak of his bewildered fancy; but he feels he must assert himself for once, and having once begun to pack for his departure, he has to go on for pride's sake.

"What is the meaning of this?" she asks at length.

"It means that I'm leaving, of course."

"To-night? There's neither train nor boat from here so late."

"There are hotels in the town, thank goodness."

"Now do listen, my dear boy—"

"Go to the deuce. I'm no boy. Boy! boy! at any rate from to-day the boy will be grown-up enough not to get in your way."

And he goes on packing. She grows paler, and sits silent, gazing in front of her. At last she rises, and goes to the door, but there she turns.

"Well, Lorentz—you must do as you will. But let me give you a parting piece of advice: whatever you decide to do, try and live up to what you preach. It's a poor-spirited thing to play high, and then, when you lose, go to pieces like this. Good-night!"

He did not answer, but stood listening to her step as she went down the stairs.

A while after he closed the door of the room that had been his for so many years. In there on a shelf his school-books still lay. He got down the stairs without meeting anyone, he opened the outer door—no one was to be seen out there either, and with his suit-case in his

hand he hurried away. Confound it! there was the Finland dog! It dashed up and jumped on him, thinking they were off for a walk together. He had to harden his heart and chase the dog back. Down in the avenue he could not help turning and looking at the long, white main-building and the many red farm-offices behind it. This had been his home. He felt now that he would never come here any more.

VII

The hotel lady opened her eyes wide when she found that the person who rang and asked for a room was the young gentleman from Bruseth. Lorentz tried to invent an explanation: he said that he wished to leave by the morning train. But, if that was all, Bruseth was not so far off that he could not very well have slept at home.

Presently he was standing in the middle of a small room, with his hat still on his head and his suit-case in his hand. He knew that the men's club in the town had a gathering that evening in another part of the building; he might go there, meet acquaintances, and make a night of it with cards and drink. It would surely be a relief to have a reckless flutter, if anyone was game to take a hand, and at the same time drink himself thoroughly drunk. But his mouth twisted into an involuntary grimace. His hat seemed to find a peg of its own accord, his toilet things came out of his bag before he knew what he was about, and, when everything was in its place, he sat down by the window and looked out into the gray twilight of the summer night. The little town was asleep. Not a footfall in the street.

He is still driven hither and thither by warring emo-

tions. He has to get up and pace the floor. At one moment he rages at his companions in the city, who led him into such folly—the next he curses the mighty old woman at Bruseth, who had the heart to punish him in this fashion. But at last he is worn out. He sits down again almost ready to weep.

He bows his head. If he could only sleep. Now that the worst of the tempest is over, he has to admit that he has blundered into a quite impossible situation. He has perhaps helped to send Mother at Bruseth to her grave, he has thrown away a splendid inheritance, and he has struck his only sister a blow in the face. And last of all he has, so to speak, pulled himself up by the roots, and now he sits here without home, without kin, without any real foothold. Go back to the city—to his old comrades? And begin to bellow against private property again? Aye, indeed! he is the one to take that line! To manufacture ideals out of his own disappointments, to rage at the rich because he has not inherited all he hoped—aye! a blind impulse within him might find an outlet in that way, but, as he sits here staring it in the face, as it were, again his mouth twists into a grimace. Louise may believe what she likes, but after all he has a little self-respect.

But stay here? Impossible!

At last he is in bed, and now to try and sleep. Is Louise sleeping? Of course she is. She is in the right this time too. Perhaps she is lying smiling in her sleep at this Communist hero who is capable of behaving as

he did to-day. "Preach no doctrine that you yourself can't live up to!" she had said at parting.

A clock in the house strikes two. He tosses to and fro in his bed, shuts his eyes, and tries to force himself to sleep. If only one had not this seething chaos inside one, all these contradictions that it's impossible to reconcile.

Louise! of course she is not to blame. But go to her and say so—impossible! Maybe she is lying there now weeping bitterly. And now memories from his childhood throng upon him. She had always defended him, always been his providence. Oh, never had he felt how much he loved her as he does now. But go up with his tail between his legs and tell her so—impossible!

When the clock strikes three, the dawn begins to break. And he lies there trying to solve a problem. He sees himself at the moment when he had shown the lawyer out, and was on the point of bracing himself up to go in and wish Louise joy. He had really meant to do it, a better self within him told him it was right. But what happened? It seemed as though, at the mere thought of her having got more than he, he had suddenly slipped into a torrent of savage fury, which whirled him away, so that everything had gone from bad to worse. Is that how we are made?

A new society—will that be enough?

Hitherto you have lived on theories only, my friend. Every time a problem knocked at the door, you simply referred it to this "new society." But strip man of his

many creeds, and are selfish and brutishness all that is left? Is that true? Is that so with you?

A crisis has sprung up and taken you by the throat —grapple with it. Overboard with cant. Have you the stuff in you to cope with it?

You must go through with it, Louise had said.

Go away—but where? Stay here—impossible! Be Louise's enemy for the rest of your life because she has inherited more than you have—yes, that no doubt's what a mean-spirited scrub would do. Or go up to Bruseth and play the shame-faced hound that fawns after it has bitten. No, never in this world!

But you must go through with it.

The clock struck; the hands must be going round; it would soon be morning and he must be getting up. Work was in full swing at Bruseth already, no doubt. But for the first time he faced a day he did not know what to do with. Show himself in the town? Everyone knew him, and many would come and question him.

But nevertheless, on in the forenoon, he went down the street to a two-storied wooden building. Here lived Herr Prahl, attorney.

When you are tired out with emotion and want of sleep, you will often do exactly the opposite to what you would think possible at other times. If you are humbled and ashamed, you may feel impelled to do some humiliating thing, which, afterward, will plunge you into yet deeper shame.

Lorentz knocked, and then walked into a large office. He was directed to an inner room. The fat old lawyer got up from behind a writing-desk, held out a podgy hand with a signet-ring upon it, and asked how he could be of service.

Lorentz heard himself utter a question that was quite incredible. He was giving himself away to this man who was his enemy. What if Louise had seen him now! He was actually standing there asking if he might look through the will again.

"With the greatest pleasure," said the lawyer, and gave him a look over his gold-rimmed glasses. He brought the document out of the safe, and soon the young man was sitting reading it through.

But it was all plain enough. It was impossible to misunderstand it. So he had to get up and hand it back again.

"Have you any remark to make, Herr Alme?"

"No, it was only something to do with . . . with the crematorium, that I didn't remember exactly. Excuse my having troubled you."

But now the old fox showed a fang. He raised his head, looked at him through his glasses and smiled. "I had expected you, young man, to add: As we make our bed, so we must lie."

Lorentz threw back his head and drew himself up. "But you will notice, Herr Prahl, that you were disappointed. Good-day."

He felt the lawyer's smile in his back as he went out.

The milk-cart from Bruseth was standing outside the dairy as he passed by with bent head. Luckily the driver was inside with his cans, but the horse knew him, and turned its head toward him and whinnied.

That day he wandered about in the woods near the town. He went as far as the ridge overlooking Bruseth and stood there a while looking down at the manor, like someone who has no heart to go nearer. Above the manor lay the horse-paddock, and in it was a troop of young horses that he knew. Lady, the gray blood-filly, was one of them—she wore a bell. He could not help going down there, and he stood a good while with the filly's head between his hands, talking to her. Yesterday forenoon he had believed that all the horses were his—and now? That is what comes of having ideas. But he must go through with it. Suddenly he thought he heard someone coming, and set off running like a thief.

And another night came, and he slunk into the hotel and lay there and could not sleep.

If one only had a father. He lay looking back at his earliest childhood. A dim picture of his real mother rose before him. But the road that led to her had been blocked for years. His real parents would be mere strangers now, no doubt, even if they lived; so it was no use turning to them.

You must go through with it! And you must grapple with it yourself.

And again the dawn of a new day creeps in.

It seemed to him that by his visit to the lawyer the day before he had plumbed the depths of humiliation. Deeper he could not possibly descend. But what then? To run away would do no good. If he was to be able to go on living, he must turn upon his troubles and overcome them one by one. And he must begin with Louise.

Oh, if it had only been a question of delivering a lecture as to how the new ideal society should be constituted! But this was something much more difficult; this meant taking something upon his own shoulders, making a Canossa-pilgrimage to his sister and confessing to her that he had behaved like a cur.

But there is no getting round it.

The whole hotel was still asleep when he got up and began to dress. He put some money on the table, wrote a few words to the hostess in pencil, packed his suitcase and stole out. All was quiet in the streets, the town was not yet awake.

The east is reddening, but the sun is not up yet. He begins to climb up through the upper town, he passes the last little wooden houses, and comes out on the lower slopes of the Bruseth lands.

He can see now over the roofs of the town and across the lake to the country on the farther side, beginning to glow in the first rays of the rising sun. On the farms round about the cocks are beginning to crow. Woods and meadows and fields shine with dew; he sees swal-

lows flash through the blue air; he hears the song of larks; and all the time the floating scent of a multitude of flowers is in his nostrils.

And high up under the forest-clad ridge lies the great manor, his lost inheritance, his lost home, where now his sister rules. The road up thither is no easy one. But he will go up there and say that all that has happened is as it should be. That the will is just, that his sister is free from blame, and that he has behaved shamefully. No, it is not an easy road. "No help here in air-drawn theories, in irresponsible talk; you must think some beginning out for yourself, and first of all you must go to Louise."

Never before had he traveled this road so slowly. But half-way up the last slope he turns and sees the whole wide landscape lit up by the rising sun. The wooded heights on the farther side of the lake glow red, the windows of the farmsteads are aflame, the lake is golden. It is as though all he sees comes streaming to meet him with overwhelming riches, sweeping into his soul, and expanding it with a marvelous sense of summer. Life will yet be glorious—but you must begin with yourself.

And now he is in the avenue. Now he is drawing near the manor. But everything is still asleep, and all the doors must be locked. He cannot go in, run up stairs and wake his sister with a kiss. So he turns in at the garden gate, steals down the graveled walks to

the syringa summer-house, and sits there with his elbows on the stone table and his head cupped in his hands.

An hour might have passed. Everything had grown vague about him, when a nose was suddenly thrust against his face and the Finland hound began to lick his cheek. "Why are you so set on my coming here, King?" says a well-known voice, and before him stands Louise with a spade in one hand and a bundle of plants in the other.

They gazed at one another. Then he burst out laughing, like a naughty boy when he wants to escape a scolding. She was very pale. But at last she too tried to laugh.

VIII

It was a strange time that followed.

He joined in the work on the farm as though nothing was the matter; and it was not as the master any longer—he had sunk to the level of a stranger on a visit. He told everyone, indeed, that in the autumn he was going to take up law, but he could read in the eyes of those about him that they knew there was something amiss, and he had to put up with this—it began, in fact, to be a point of honor with him not to mind what folks thought.

This roused a quite new impulse in him—he would train himself to bear mischance without blaming others and without letting any suspect that he found it hard to bear. Was he man enough? Well! at least it would be good fun to try. It was no light matter to live on here and look at all the glories that might have been his—there were constant humiliations to swallow; but he swallowed them and forced himself to show a smiling face—it was a new sport in a way, and called for its own special training. And there went his sister, who had gained all that he had lost, and yet he had never behaved so well to her as now. Will he be able to keep it up?

Her eyes often rested upon him searchingly. "Stare

away, my girl, and see how far you can probe into me!"

She had laid aside her superior tone. She took pains now not to hurt his feelings. Did all this cheerfulness of his ring true? He would sit of an evening on the great kitchen table, dangling his legs and telling stories to the cotters and farm hands, till the place rang with laughter. But why was he so pale, and his eyes so sleepless?

Of course she could not help pitying the boy, but then he had only himself to thank that things had taken the turn they had. He would nudge her in the side like a youngster, as they were walking over the fields together, and cry: "Last touch." And when he tore away, she could not but join in the game and fly after; and when at last she caught him they would roll over upon the grass together. People stood and watched this brother and sister who were such good friends.

Herr Prahl came up once a week; Lorentz didn't exist for him nowadays, but he would ask: "Where is Her Majesty? The Queen is holding her Cabinet today." The manager of the sawmill, the bailiff, the miller and the forester were called together, and Louise sat there young and eager, taking her full share in everything. True, she gave due weight to what these men said, but she had an opinion of her own, and it was not hard to see that the widow of Bruseth lived on in her.

But it would sometimes happen that she asked Lo-

rentz to be present, and he swallowed that too, and made no objection; he sat among them seemingly much at his ease—even to the lawyer he would express his opinion quite calmly. It did not come easy; no, these meetings were perhaps the bitterest pill of all; he felt as though he were stretching himself on the rack of his own free will, and no one must see him as much as clench his teeth.

True, he had to scour the country afterward far and wide, so that his body at least might storm itself out. And when at length his wanderings had tired him out, he would sit down and gaze out over the lake, the woods and the settled lands, forget himself and find his way back to peace. This rich, billowy countryside always had so much to tell him; but now its story was not quite the same as before. He began to catch a glimpse, it seemed, of a spiritual landscape behind it all. Creeds, martyrs, ridge behind ridge. Will you take this path? No, no! his healthy youth rebelled; he would go away—he could not go on much longer like this.

Then when he got home, Louise would ask if he wouldn't go for a ride on Lady. This, too, was something he had to swallow; he was not sure that the filly was his any longer, and he was too proud to ask. So he would answer: Oh yes, he had thought of it, but he could not manage it to-day.

But now he lay awake of nights thinking of someone to whom he had given little thought so far—of a

father, of his own father! He remembered that in the city a couple of years back a man had come up to him—wasn't his name Brock, an engineer? He had been a lifelong friend of his father's; and he said much in his praise. But at that time Lorentz's head had been so full of other things that a father he no longer remembered meant very little to him, and besides—shouldn't one cut oneself loose from these irrational family ties? It was only now, as he lay there, that he dug up out of his memory one thing and another that the engineer had told him. And everything he had told him was good. Suppose that his father, in spite of his ill-fortune, were really a man of mark? Suppose the lady of Bruseth had not told the truth?

A father, a father! Someone he could lay all his difficulties before and ask for advice!

Summer had set in now in earnest. Lake and country-side lay in a quivering heat-haze. It was light now all night through. It was a slack time on the big farm until harvest came.

So brother and sister are thrown much together in their daily life. He is still so amiable to her that he seems to her to be forcing the note. She teases him, asking whether he expects to grow a halo soon, and he says that he is thinking of settling down there before long as a healer of the sick by the laying on of hands. They laugh. They joke. But to him it seems that the bow is stretched tighter each time—how will it end? It hurts to go about wearing a mask before

one's own sister; he tries to find neutral ground where they can meet and be their own natural selves.

The walls of her room are covered with photographs of Renaissance pictures she has seen in the galleries of Europe. He surprises her by showing an interest in them; he begins to turn over the pages of her books and portfolios, and is not above asking about this or that. She is glad of this, and she finds it pleasant to sit over her needlework telling her experiences. But she is not so very sure that he really listens as intently as he seems to.

Then sometimes he would ask her to play, a thing he had never done before; and she would sit down at the piano, pull up the sleeves of her loose summer-gown and strike up. He was not sure that she played very well, but it might be that, when autumn came and he went away, they would drift so far apart that he might never hear her play again.

Lorentz, too, had learned to sing by sight, and she would accompany him while he did his best to get through a song of Kierulf or of Grieg. It was almost as though he were singing a song of farewell, and he felt as though in the music he drew near to his sister, and could be himself again. There was no heritage to part them here; while the song lasted they seemed to be children again, to take one another by the hand and fly far, far above the earth.

One evening in the middle of June he was lying in a deck chair at the open door on to the veranda, in

his shirt-sleeves and with a pipe in his mouth, while Louise sat in the room behind him, humming over her embroidery. Speaking as if he was thinking aloud, he said: "It is hard being young, at least for us men."

"Is it worse for you men?"

"I believe it is worse. It begins with the day when a boy thinks himself grown-up, and no one else will admit it."

She laughed a little.

"Yes, laugh away. But it is not a happy time, and if ever I have a son, I will remember it. One day the boy is playing with bricks, and the next he is holding forth to his comrades on social questions. The grown-up folks laugh. But the day comes when he avenges himself."

She lifted her head, forgetting her work. Was he looking back over the past again and making up his balance-sheet?

He went on: "People speak of the enthusiasm of youth, but never of the desperation of youth. And yet —maybe it's from defiance that the young draw most of their ideas."

"It seems to me that's a pity both for the young folks and the ideas."

He lay back in his chair, looking out at the distant sunset over the blue wooded crests, far away beyond the lake. At last he said, "If one had a father even."

A motherly look came into her face as she fixed her eyes upon him.

He went on: "When things get too tangled, it would be good to have someone to go to. It's not everyone that has things cut and dried, as you have."

She sat there as before, forgetful of her sewing. Well, she did not go about feeling guilty toward her brother; what had fallen out was none of her doing, and she was not sentimental. Perhaps she showed a little too plainly how much she enjoyed planning and managing—she was thoroughly in her element these days. But if he had got Bruseth and not she, she would pretty surely have been in full swing with something else by now.

He went on: "When we were quite little, Loo, we used to sneak off by ourselves now and then to talk of our real father and mother. Do you remember?"

"Yes—but it's so long ago."

"We didn't manage to ask them to the funeral either?"

"My dear boy, you know very well that it was impossible."

"Was it?" He turned his face toward her. "Can you tell me what it was they did wrong?"

"Do I know any more than you? Mother would never go into that with us. But surely we two can never thank her enough for having rescued us and brought us here."

After a while he said, as if to the distant blue hills, "What if our parents were really much finer people

than . . . than she whom we came to call mother afterward."

She started a little and stared at him. "Dear Lorentz —can't we talk of something else?"

"I am going up to see them soon," he says.

"What? No, Lorentz, you mustn't do that."

"Will you go with me, Loo?" His voice showed that he was not joking.

"Let us talk of something else."

"Our own father and mother are living in poverty in a hut far up in the hills. And their children, who have been brought up to riches, will have nothing to do with them."

She grew angry. "Oh, you know very well that is not the reason."

"They are old folk now. Will you come with me?"

"Mother would never have forgiven us. And now— when she is hardly cold in her grave! Lorentz, you don't mean it."

He got up without answering and went out into the garden, whistling.

Her embroidery lay untouched on her lap, and she sat still, gazing in front of her.

Their own parents—no, she had never thought of them but as something evil, and far, far away, that her mother here at Bruseth had saved them from. Were they still alive?

But she could not hinder Lorentz from going up there. And what then? Suppose that he found a new

foothold there, and she, his sister, was left in the cold? For the first time it came home to her that she needed this brother, and now she saw a danger of losing him for ever.

A couple of evenings later, when he was in bed already, the door opened and she came in, in a thin, light-colored morning gown, with her brown hair hanging over her shoulders.

"Sorry," she said, "but I'm just going to wash my hair."

"Here, in my room?"

"Nonsense—just listen." She sat down on the edge of the bed. "There is something you must tell me."

"Well?"

"What made you suddenly think of this—of this about our father and mother?"

"Oh!" He passed his hand over his eyes. "Well, for one thing, there was a friend of Father's who looked me up a couple of years ago, and told me about him. I think, by the way, he said he was my godfather. But at that time I was not in a mood to care much about it."

"Tell me what the man said."

"He said Father was one of the most notable men he had known."

"And Mother?"

"He said she was very beautiful as a young woman. But imagine what they must have gone through when they had to part with both you and me."

"How was it then that things turned out so very badly for them?"

"Oh, sickness and bad luck, Louise. It's a long story, I fancy."

"But didn't they . . . didn't they do something very bad?"

"No, that's untrue."

She sat silent for a while, looking toward the window.

Then at last she said: "I have been thinking a great deal about this. For, if it is true that they have had such a hard time, perhaps it would be wrong of us not to go and see them. But . . ."

"But?" He raised his eyebrows.

"But what about Mother who lies in her grave, Lorentz. If she were to see us going there?"

"Is she nearer to you in blood?"

"Talk sense now. The whole thing is so difficult. It is so horribly difficult."

He could not help smiling. The millionairess with the clear, level head, for whom the world held scarcely a single riddle—perhaps now she too had stumbled over something puzzling, a memory of her real mother —perhaps a far-off voice had begun to call. This was something that could not be entered in an account—she was at a loss; she turned to her brother.

"At any rate I can't let you go there alone," she said, still looking toward the window.

"Hurrah, you'll go too! Hang me if you're not the

right sort of girl after all. Shall we start to-morrow?"

"What are you thinking of! No, we're selling a hundred pigs by auction at the end of this week. We can't get away before Monday."

"All right, we'll say Monday then."

She sighed as if she were undertaking something hard and painful. Then she passed her hand over his hair, said good-night and slipped quietly out.

IX

THE years had passed over the heads of Merle and Peer Holm, and the pair no longer murmured at the hardships that came their way. He had once been engineer of the great dams in Egypt; he had come home a wealthy man, had married Merle, the pretty daughter of Uthaug the merchant, and lived some happy years on the estate he had bought. Then he had undertaken the building of a big hydraulic power-station, and had lost all he owned in the undertaking; and when afterward he began on the gigantic task of getting his head above water again, he had overtaxed himself and broken down utterly in health. He had sought this remote mountain valley in the forlorn hope that the air might restore him, and at first Merle's family had to club together to raise enough money to keep them from sheer starvation.

The bread of charity was bitter, to be sure, but no doubt all this would only be temporary. In his day he had made a fortune by inventions, and he still had plenty of ideas. But a man cannot design when his eyes are bad; he cannot think out problems when he is constantly racked by headache. How long would their relations keep life in them? Years passed up here in this solitude, and he was no better. Things might

look brighter for a time, but it was only to grow dark again straightway. The children were little, they played their games, and did not dream that their parents lay awake at night hagridden by care.

So one day the family flitted to a little laborer's cottage with a bit of land attached. One more struggle —and this time not to rise, but to do without charity and to make a living from this plot of land, as once the cotter had done. When Peer Holm was well enough he took jobs of work as a smith, Merle, the once lovely young woman, who had dreamed of an artist's life, toiled now in house and byre, and dragged and carried loads like any cotter's wife. It was a sad enough change from their days of prosperity.

They began to see that this was to be their way of life till the end came—but what about the children? When Merle's aunt, the mighty lady of Bruseth, offered to take the two eldest, it was difficult to say no. They would be well off and well cared for with her, they would go to a good school, and perhaps . . . yes, perhaps, when the time came, they might even be her heirs. Then some day when they were grown-up they would be grateful to their parents for having thought of their children rather than of themselves. True, it was no light matter to give them up, but it might well have been still harder to keep them and see them grow up in poverty, knowing all the time that they might have done so much better for them. They had one other child, a little girl, left to them to

comfort themselves with, but she died one spring through an accident, and the days that followed were evil for Merle and Peer.

Their thoughts turned the more to the other two, who at least were alive. Their mother wrote and wrote, but the mistress of Bruseth had doubtless other things to do than answer letters. Once in a while there came a little letter in a clumsy, childish hand; and every time one came, Merle grew younger again and went singing about her work. They felt the pinch a little harder on the day when Merle's aunt let them know that she could not put up with the children's having two sorts of parents, that she must have them entirely as her own, or . . . or they might have them back.

Well, well! then they had better have them back again. Cut the last tie that bound them to their children—never! But—bring them here? They looked round the little hut, thought of the food, often meager enough for two, that would have to be shared among four—thought how well off the children were at Bruseth. Merle lay awake turning and turning over plans in her mind. She would move to the city and open a boarding-house, so that the children and their parents could live together. Aye, to the city—but Peer would never in the world get well there. Should she sacrifice him for the children's sake? No. Should she give up all claim to her boy and little girl for ever? No, no! One day she would come to a decision, the next it had grown quite impossible. She looked at her husband,

broken down by adversity, and she thought of Louise and Lorentz, to see whom only for a moment she would have walked many leagues. Peer made another desperate effort to complete an invention—a new harrow; if it succeeded it might set everything right. But his head gave out completely, and he had to take to bed again for days and weeks. Merle dared not mention the children to him any more; she knew well what he was suffering as he lay there.

The end of it was that the two little ones had to be left where they were. Doubtless it was the best gift their parents could make them. What their father and mother felt there was no need for the children to know. The little letters in the clumsy, childish handwriting stopped coming, and Merle went in and out at her work and sang no more.

And the days went on. Her hair turned gray before its time, her hands grew rough and her back bent; his hair and beard were grown white, and a constant unrest was on him, as if he went about seeking some way out of their troubles. They were so lonely up here, where there was no one in the neighborhood with whom they could make friends; the winters, with their crushing snowfalls and burning cold, were long to get through; spring and summer and autumn brought their burden of hard work to the poor. Sun and rain determined their lot for the coming year—even if you can raise only enough potatoes for one, yet they must do for two. But they toiled together indoors and out,

and at least they had each other. Once the people round about had called him engineer; in time that was forgotten and he became "the smith" for them. They sank to the level of the ordinary peasant's life, they lived and dressed like peasants; they grew old; always, likely enough, they felt the pinch of some trouble or another, yet no one heard them complain.

But every Sunday Merle sat down and wrote. Peer had given up asking what she was writing; he went away and left her in peace. They were long letters to Louise and Lorentz; she put them into envelopes, but she dared not send them. She sat here, examining them as to how things were going with them, told them a little of how things were with her and father, gave them good advice, regularly guided their bringing up. Years passed, the letters overflowed from drawers into a box, and as time went on and she followed the children's growth, they needed fresh care and fresh counsel to suit their age. And throughout the week she would go about happy in looking forward to her next letter-writing day, when she would be with them once again and talk with them.

And there was another habit she could not break herself of—going to the post-office to ask for letters. For surely one day her aunt might change her mind and give the children leave to write. Years came and went, and still the tall, pale woman was seen hurrying off as soon as the post was due. Then, when the hunchback post-master had searched through all his

letters and looked up at her and shook his head, she would sometimes ask him in her quiet voice to look them over once again. Well, if there was nothing today, it might come another day.

At night she would lie, her lips moving noiselessly, so that Peer might not notice. He had his own godless religion; he spoke with fervor of the eternal forces in man's own nature; but he believed in nothing beyond. She did not meddle with his beliefs, but for her this was no longer enough. In time it was as though she built a little shrine in her secret heart, and the shrine was for these two little ones. Here she met them once more, at night before she shut her eyes in sleep, and she hardly knew, at these times, that she lay there with folded hands. Such a woman is perhaps rather apt to be silent in the daytime, but her eyes shine, and if one thing or another seems hard to bear, she finds that it is not quite unbearable after all.

He, for his part, in the cold winter days, would carry water from the well till his beard was stiff with rime and ice. He dragged wood home from the forest on the sleigh, and often the snow was so deep that it was hard to make any headway. He tramped down to the village, rucksack on back, and stood there like any other crofter to sell a pat of butter and buy coffee and sugar. It might happen that the store was full of men and women, and, if in good humor, he would loiter there and tell stories. Oh aye, he could make these heavy dalesmen laugh. He told them stories of his

life out in the wide world, and they stared—could it be true? Didn't he look just like one of them, dressed in frieze, with rough workman's hands? True, he wore blue glasses, and his hair and beard were always well kept. But could he ever really have been a man like that?

Girls tittered when he passed, for often he would stop and crack a joke with them. "Look out for me tonight," he would say—"and then we'll settle about —you know what." Why, of course they had to laugh. He would be like this in a spell of better health, but the bad days would come back—and things were worse then.

The Young People's Club came and asked him to lecture. Well, he had plenty to talk about. Merle went with him to the club-house and sat by the lecturer's desk listening; both of them wore their Sunday clothes, faded now and out-of-date. They got on well with young folks, and one fine day Merle made up her mind that she had time enough to start a little sewing-class for the young girls.

They rarely spoke of their children—it would only mean ripping up old wounds. But they would sit at times of an evening and talk of all the young people who go off to America. For the first few years they write home often; their parents share in all that befalls them out there. But the letters grow fewer, and at last they stop altogether. The boy or girl has struck root out there, they are doing well, starting a family

on the new soil, mother and father are so far away, they are needed no longer, they fade in the mist and are forgotten.

About this they would sit and talk. But the parents do not forget so easily. The mother, perhaps, goes constantly to the post-office, and time after time is disappointed; but can she believe that she is forgotten? She goes back and back year after year; it is wonderful how one can go on hoping and hoping—at least about one's own children.

And at last they would discover, Merle and Peer, that all the time it had been of their own girl and boy they had been speaking. Well, well, what matter! They begin to remind each other of things that had happened when Louise and Lorentz were little, and the winter evenings really do seem shorter. Each has a separate stock of memories and is always thinking of something new; and even if a story has been told before, it matters little—one can't hear a good tale too often.

No doubt Louise is going to school now, and is in such and such a class? And Lorentz has just begun, maybe. One day they reckon that Louise must be getting near her middle-school examination. "Next year it will be Lorentz's turn," Merle supposes. "Next year? But he's two years younger." "Yes, but he is so much cleverer." "Oh, you shouldn't say that. Louise was quite bright for her age." And then they would disagree about this, and dispute for a while, but it all

ended in son and daughter coming much more to life for them both.

"I should like Louise to grow up like you," he says one day, when he is in such good spirits that he feels inclined to make love to his own wife. "Yes indeed, I'm a nice object for anyone to be like," she answers. "I'm getting to be a regular old hag up here." "You? Why, you've never looked so pretty as you do now." And he puts his arm round her and strokes her gray hair. Her eyebrows are still as broad and dark; her eyes, when she looks at him, as young; her face as oval and delicate as—then. "Off with you," she says laughing, "you should be ashamed of yourself, standing there making fun of an old woman."

Sure enough, Peer Holm had a religion of his own. In the first years of disaster, he had felt as if he were chained down in some underworld, and he made frantic efforts to tear himself free and come to the upper air. Long years these were; but when his little girl too was torn from him by blind, senseless fatality, he felt that he had reached the very depths. He looked about him—nothing worse could befall. No help to be looked for from heaven or earth; darkness all about; but see, within himself he catches sight of a spark that begins to glow, a new strength—rise up and turn for refuge to the godhead within yourself! Blind laws rule the world, it is man alone that sees, it is man alone that feels responsibility; so marvelous art thou, oh, spirit of man! It was from now on that,

in his best moments, he went about cheerily, for he looked down from a height on all that might befall —no blow of fate could reach his inward self.

And yet—again and again this inmost self of his suffered defeat. He would overwhelm Merle with outbursts of rage born of tortured nerves—sometimes, after a sleepless night, he would stand madly fighting the air and threatening suicide. She would look at him quietly, and hardly ever answer his ravings. Then remorse would seize him—but both had grown weary of scenes of reconciliation, so now he no longer begged her forgiveness, but drew near her again cautiously. He had not only to gain her forgiveness, but to regain his own self-respect; and this was perhaps the harder task of the two.

To be cut off from reading books and newspapers was a great privation—the world sailed past and left him so far astern and outside of everything—but his eyes must be saved for the smithy work. He would sit through the long winter evenings knitting stockings, carding wool, patching boots—even a blind man can do so much. And while he so sat, his thoughts were busy with the treasures he had gathered in the days when his eyes were good and he could read without stint. Much of it still lived in his memory, and from it were born new visions and thoughts that now he could share with Merle.

They would be walking, perhaps, of an autumn evening under the starry sky, and he would put his arm

round her waist and begin to hold forth about the values set on things here on earth. One may says only the lost is won forever—but that is not true. Another, that it is only the thing one is striving for that has any value—which is not true either. No, the real treasure is the thing one has. And it rests with yourself to make it new and precious and more and more wonderful all the time. "Take you and me," he says—"Have I not you? And have you ever been such a princess in my eyes as you are now?"

"Oh, that's what you were driving at, you artful person!"

And then he would go on to speak of a new religion; not one of those the mind of modern man has burst like an worn-out garment; no, but our own age's passion for the eternal, made manifest and set free in a New Temple. We wait for him who will come one day and teach man to see the divine; not in Jahveh, the god of thunder and of sacrifice; not in the carpenter's son on the cross, but in all the glory that lies before our very eyes. Imagine a Temple with pillars and vaulting, organ and choir, where all the great light-givers of the world would be gathered together and worshiped in a spiritual symphony. Wait but a little; he is coming, he whom all await; perhaps both you and I may live to see him.

What did Merle wait for? As she walked beside him, listening, she forgot everything; it seemed as if the calamities and sufferings of many years had fallen

away from him, and he stood there young and strong again, as in their happy days. He would stand for a time, his old head thrown back, lost in the starry world above. Memories from the studies of his youth come back to him, he delivers a lecture, loses himself in a dream of solar systems, of light-years, of nebulæ. Names which she never can remember buzz in her ears—dimensions, numbers, and distances make her brain reel. And there he stands, old and ravaged, a white-haired, spectacled tiller of the soil, but with his face turned upward to the infinite oceans of light. A fettered spirit has cast off its chains and soars free up yonder; to-morrow, maybe, he must return to chains and darkness again; but what matter, they stand here together—they have each other.

Then one day she comes home with a little local paper, and sits down to look through the year's matriculation list at the school down there where Louise and Lorentz are.

"Here is Louise Alme," she says, "and Lorentz Alme. It must be they?"

"Have they . . . have they taken your aunt's name?" he stammers, taken aback.

"Perhaps they have had to," says Merle, and she seems a little more bowed as she sits gazing before her.

"Well," he goes on, "then they must look on her as their mother, I suppose." Merle passes a hand over her eyes.

They try to grasp this. The gulf between them and their children grows yet wider, now that they bear another's name.

Then she reads out the examination results. "There, you see," says she, "the boy has caught up to his sister. He is two years younger than Louise, but he has passed the final examination along with her."

That evening they sat, wondering what line the boy would take up now. Perhaps he would go to the agricultural college, if there were any idea of his having the estate. And Louise? Merle remembered that when she was still quite little she had shown a turn for the violin. What if her own dreams of being a musician should be realized in her daughter?

And next Sunday she sat down to write letters again.

They subscribed to this little local paper; perhaps once in a way they might see something in it about Bruseth. And some years after they read that the mighty widow was dead.

They gazed at each other. Might Merle venture to send a letter now? Or had the children been brought up to think so ill of their own parents that they would rather know nothing of them?

Perhaps they had better wait and see whether the young people would not write first. And now Merle took to watching from the window as though she looked for a visit from something quite out of the common. She went to the post-office as usual, but now she shrank a little from going in. Suppose there were a letter,

but that it brought something different from what she hoped for? A cold epistle from two children who had grown to be strangers? But at last she had to venture in. Still there was never any letter for her—and she would walk home more slowly than she came.

Then one day there was a letter lying on the table when she came in from the byre. A neighbor had brought it in.

"There's a love letter for you," said Peer, "or perhaps it's a bill."

Merle had to put her glasses on. It was in a bold, unknown handwriting. Her hands began to shake.

"Peer!" she cried.

"Well?"

She laughed, then began to sob, then laughed again. "It's . . . it's . . . ha, ha, ha! It's from Louise."

He was standing by the stove with a knife in his hand, making a whisk of birch twigs. He stared through his spectacles, scarcely believing his ears.

"Who . . . who is it from, do you say?"

"From them both, Peer. Here's a sheet from Lorentz, too."

And at length she pulled herself together and began to read aloud.

The children were coming on a visit very soon.

Even on a day like this there were things that must be done. The cow must be put out to graze, the pig and

the hens must be fed, Peer could not put off earthing up the potatoes any longer. But the time came when all was done, and the letters were brought out again.

He had to take them to the window, on account of his bad eyesight, and stood there spelling them out. "She's not a woman for nothing," he says, "a student, Oho! but what spelling! And hardly a single stop."

And now came a busy time! The house must be tidied, food must be laid in. He insisted on getting down himself and scrubbing the floor, and then it was forbidden to walk over it in boots or shoes.

"But what about food, Peer?"

"My dear soul, aren't there trout in the river? And we have a sheep to spare. Now, don't run away again. It's four years at least since I gave you a hug."

"Four minutes, I suppose you mean." And she stands for a moment with her face against his white beard and with her eyes closed.

The little curtains in the living-room and bedroom must come down too and be washed and ironed. But what if they came to-morrow? The two old folk worked far into the night, trotting about and getting in one another's way, scolding and blaming each other, and then as often as not bursting out laughing and embracing one another. And, by the way—beds for two grown-up people! They must go off to a neighbor and borrow them.

For the next few days he went to the station with a hand-cart every time a train was due. He stared through

his blue glasses at every stranger that alighted—things were a little indistinct about him. Was that the boy there . . . or was that the girl over there? The visitors he expected were his children, but he had no idea what they looked like.

For four days now the floor had lain all snowy white, and to save it the two old people had been living mostly in the kitchen. The sheep had been killed, and each evening saw Peer standing by the river rod in hand. Perhaps they would come to-morrow?

X

They had come by boat to the head of the lake, and then by rail up the long valley, and now they were tramping along the highroad, with rucksacks on their backs, in gray sports clothes; she with a straw hat shoved back upon her head, he bareheaded and in his shirt-sleeves. They looked about them with a mixed feeling of being here for the first time and of remembering now this, now that, from days long past. The blue-green river sings and boils in the dale bottom, and from it rise green slopes and sun-scorched farms; farther up are the brown fir-clad ridges, and last of all the blue mountains, streaked with snow, against the hot summer sky.

"I wonder where Raastad lies," says Louise, looking from farm to farm on the slopes above them.

"They are not there now."

"No, but we lived the first year in the Court-house on that farm. I fancy it was a big house with a whole lot of rooms. And mother had no servant, I remember now."

He gave her a sidelong glance. Aye, so she was beginning now to remember one thing and another. Since they left home all her talk had been of Bruseth: suppose the bailiff forgot to put the brood-mare to the stal-

lion; the fire insurance policy was due for renewal about this time, and suppose the girl in the office should forget that? The contract for next year for the supply of power to the town and district would have to be negotiated soon. No, she couldn't possibly stay away from home for more than a few days.

It was different with Lorentz. He was on a pilgrimage. But would he find what he was seeking?

They met a carter sitting on his load, and asked for Holm the engineer. He thought a little. "No," he didn't know of any engineer in this neighborhood. "That's to say—do you mean the smith?"

Some time after that they turned into a stony cart-track that wound up over the hillsides to a farm; but there it shrank into a foot-path, and when they had followed it some way farther, they stopped as of one accord. Before them they saw, on a scanty patch of level ground, a cotter's croft with two small, brown, wooden houses under turf roofs. Close by the cottage wall some berry bushes grew, and in the field below a white goat was tethered.

The two stood still a moment, gazing at this poor man's home. Here their father and mother had lived through all these years, while they themselves were growing up in wealth and ease.

"What's the matter, Louise?"

She had sunk down upon a stone, and was sitting with her face buried in her hands.

"Now look here, my girl, you must pull yourself

together. It won't do for you to arrive there blubbering."

"Well, don't talk to me then." She pulled out her handkerchief and dried her eyes.

"Now look here, Lo—" she looked him over, "we are far too dressed up, both of us. Come here and I'll take that mourning-band off your arm. It's no good arriving like an obituary notice either." She ripped the black crape from her hat next and put it in her rucksack, and then began to pick some wild flowers for a bouquet.

"We're taking our time over this," said her brother, impatiently.

"Oh, I must have time to get myself in hand a little. You know I'd never imagined it would be like this." And she caught her breath again as she struggled to calm herself.

When at last she followed him across the field she had lost her usual buoyant air. She gazed at the two small sun-parched houses as though they made her feel humble. All she remembers now about the Courthouse is that her mother had no maid. And she seems to see her mother with her fine oval face, framed by dark hair—oh, how beautiful she must have been! —and now this mother seems to turn to her and ask her where she has been so long.

But a woman is coming out of the house, shading her eyes from the sun, and gazing toward them. She is white-haired, and wears a light-colored overall above

her dress; she looks at them expectantly; now she comes forward, and a strange smile lights up the oval face.

"Good gracious!" she cries, stopping short, as she discovers that she is in her kitchen dress. Brother and sister look at one another. Do they know this woman? Ah, but the voice! "Is it you, Mother?" cries Lorentz. "Good-day Mother!" says Louise and hastens toward her.

But when they have come close they seem on both sides to hold back unconsciously. They stop short a few paces apart. Merle sees before her a grown woman and a young man—they must be her children, but is that what they are like? They have grown and grown in her imagination all these many years, but is this what they really look like? It is as though, on both sides, they felt the need of a moment in which to make acquaintance. At last the mother bids them welcome, though her face is still a little troubled. And they must come in and make themselves at home. It is almost as if she is a little doubtful whether they will.

Never had Lorentz seen Louise as she was to-day. When they came round to the front of the cottage, they found a birch sapling fastened to either side of the entrance-door—in token of welcome. "Oh, look!" she burst out, and stood still. "Just look!" Again emotion overcame her and she tried to fight it down. When at last they were inside the little room with its white-scoured floor and the flower-pots in its windows, their

mother still seemed a little uneasy—were these a couple of fine strangers come a-visiting? "Won't you please sit down—though it's very plain here," she says—but at that instant Louise throws herself upon her neck and begins to sob. It seems as if the years between her first childhood and now were swept away in that moment. "Now, now, don't cry, child," says her mother, stroking her hair, "don't cry, my child." And then she herself laughs and cries, scarcely knowing that she is doing either.

And Lorentz is left standing there. He has never cared for being petted by elderly women, but this is something different. Louise first, of course, now as always; while he stands here as if he were nobody. Ah, at last his mother discovers him too. "And you, my boy?" she says. "Well, so that is what you are like!" She gives him her hand once more; it is so wrinkled and worn, but within his it feels tender and clinging. "Maybe you would like a hug too?" And at last he feels a mother's arms about his neck. Is he laughing? Is he crying? Dare he press her to him closer?

"And where is Father?" asks Louise.

"He's gone to the station with the hand-cart for the third time to-day." "But we saw no one, did we, Lorentz?—except an old man with blue glasses and a white beard."

"That was father, sure enough," says Merle, smiling. "He won't have known you, his eyesight is so bad."

A little afterward she looks out of the window and says: "Here we have him, here comes Father."

Was he to be allowed to go dragging a heavy hand-cart all alone on their account? They ran out and down through the field at such a rate that the goat there took fright and nearly broke its tether. They took hold of one another's hands and ran and jumped like children. And here comes the once famous engineer, now parish smith, in gray frieze clothes, collarless, on his head an old straw hat. He stops, cocks his head to one side so as to see better, wonders at these strange cries, these wild shrieks. What can this be? "Good-day, Father." They rush upon him, give themselves no time for a proper greeting, take possession of his cart, and end by each pulling a shaft. "What's the meaning of this assault?" he stammers, but begins to understand it all, and laughs as he follows them. He is quite dumfounded. And down from the cottage comes Merle to meet them, laughing like the rest.

Inside all talk at once, though they are none of them quite sure of themselves, for there are some things that it might be painful to touch on. So to be on the safe side, they talk about everything and nothing. But now and again their eyes have a questioning look—there are pauses that must be hurried over. It won't do to speak of Bruseth, of her who is just dead, nor of the inheritance, nor about the young folks' future plans, still less of how their parents can manage to support life in these huts. Peer stands by himself with

his head on one side that he may see with his best eye—he smiles all the time without knowing it. Lorentz had dreamed of a father who looked very different—something of a hero, with great powers that he himself might attain to some day. And there he stands, a ruin; yes indeed—but perhaps . . . all the same. Wait a little before you judge. But all these impressions go so deep that he finds it difficult to say much. "Do you smoke, *Father?*" asks Louise. Father was a new word in her mouth. "No, of course I don't." "Is it for Mother, then, that you're filling that pipe?" "Ha, ha, ha!" they all laugh. "Won't you try my cigarettes?" Lorentz asks, and brings out a silver case; but his father waves them away, shaking his head. "No, I don't smoke," he says to Louise, "it's the very mischief for my poor head. And so I break myself of smoking four times a year." "And then you break your vows?" She stands looking at him coquettishly with her hands behind her back. "On great occasions," he allows. "Like to-day, for example." And he gets hold of a box of matches, and Louise takes it from him that she may light his pipe herself.

"And what a white floor you have, Mother!" she says, going over to her again, so that her father may not think that he is the only one. "It was your father that scrubbed it," Merle puts her right. "Father? Are you the housemaid here?" Both the young people laugh; Merle smiles; Peer flushes, and says nothing.

"And you have a piano?" says Louise to her mother.

"Yes, it's an old one of my mother's I had sent up here."

A little later Peer went over to his wife. "Wasn't I right?" he says. "It is you she is like." "And what about me?" asks Lorentz. "You," Louise answers for the others, "why, you're like yourself." "Oh no, you are like your mother, too," says his father. "And all the better for you."

They were sitting down now round the table, with glasses of milk; and all were more at ease. Merle couldn't help touching a little silver brooch that Louise had on her breast. "So you have that still?" "Do you recognize it, Mother?" "Of course I do. You had it on when you left us. But your outfit otherwise wasn't much to boast of." And there was a little pause again, as they all looked back on the long years of separation.

"And so you had a big funeral?" Peer asks all at once, (as well to make the plunge). "Yes," say brother and sister, and look at one another. Another pause. There is no getting round the aunt at Bruseth. Merle has shaded her eyes with her hand.

Then she rises and goes toward the kitchen. "Why, I must be dreaming," she says, "to sit here like this." And a little after Louise follows her.

The reason the young girl has got back her spirits is that she has made up her mind that her parents shall come to Bruseth the very next day and live with her. It should surely be simple enough? But now she stands

out here in the little kitchen with its open fireplace, without a range. She looks about her, she looks at this worn woman, who has struggled on here in deepest poverty all this time—struggled with cooking and dairy-work and byre and washing; this is her mother; and again she feels as if she must fling herself about her neck—but she does not. It is as though, in spite of all, this slender, white-haired woman has still about her something lofty that holds one aloof. Voice, movements, and eyes seem to harmonize in a music of their own that makes one go gently in drawing near. "Take care, Louise. Don't rush things."

"I suppose you can lend me an apron, Mother?" And next minute she begins to help with the midday meal.

"Mother." To hear the word again! Merle seemed to feel a little shock each time, and again and again she had to look across at her daughter and let her eyes rest on her for a while.

XI

At the table in the other room father and son sat and gazed at each other. Both smiled, as they thought: "Is that what you are like?"

"Are you going to be a farmer?" asked his father.

"No, Bruseth has been left to Louise."

"And you?"

"Oh, I must think out something to do by next autumn."

The father noticed a peculiar drawn look on the young man's face, and guessed there was more here than met the eye.

"Won't you show me your smithy, Father?"

His father laughed. "That's a sight worth seeing, isn't it?"

"Well, the place you work in."

"Hm." His father smiled sadly, and shook his head.

Likely enough Peer Holm had missed his children as sorely as Merle, but he had taken the lack of them as a cross which he must bear. Now, looking at this well-dressed son, whom he had not been man enough to support and rear himself, he feels more and more what a failure he has been. It has all been his own fault, it seems to him. As he looks at Lorentz he thinks: "I dragged your mother down with me, but thank God

you children were saved. What must you two think of such a father?"

"You will show me the smithy, won't you, Father, when I ask you?"

"Lord, yes, of course I will!" And he gets up.

The smithy is a little bit of a house, lying by itself on the higher ground, and they are soon standing in the half-dark room with its earthen floor. A forge, bellows, anvil; some hammers, pincers and files; a workbench with a few things on it. A plow is being repaired, a reaping-machine awaits its turn, and over in a corner is a mysterious box with a tarpaulin over it.

"Here you see it in all its glory," says his father. "You have probably seen mechanical workshops that were rather larger?"

"You too, I daresay?"

The father looked down. "Oh yes, maybe I have."

"Why, you were one of the chief engineers at the First Cataract; and you built the first railway for King Menelik of Abyssinia."

"Well, yes—and now I'm here." His look was shamefaced. Of course it was all his own fault. The inflamed eyes were raised to his son's face as if he asked to be forgiven.

Lorentz's voice was husky as he asked: "How . . . how did it happen, Father?"

"You may well ask! It is worst for your mother."

"Father!" Lorentz suddenly held out his hand.

"Well?"

"Don't you think I could help you? Can't you make use of me?"

"But, my dear boy . . ."

"If I were to go to a technical school, and we joined forces afterward?"

This warmth that made the voice tremble, this readiness for self-sacrifice—yet this was a son who could not possibly respect his father! Peer Holm began to breathe heavily; but he tried to laugh.

"What put it into your head that that could be worth while?"

"I had a talk with your engineer friend, Klaus Brock. He said your head was as fertile as ever in brilliant ideas; it was only your health stood in the way."

"Aye, aye—so Brock said that." His father looked down, then drew himself up suddenly, and came and laid his hands on the young man's shoulders: "Well, well, thanks for the offer, my boy. I . . . I see clearly you're at the age when one is anxious to throw oneself away."

"I have done that already. But to help one's father is not throwing oneself away."

"Yes, indeed it is. But seriously, haven't you made up your mind what you want to do?"

"Quite. I want to help you."

At this his father shook him, with an involuntary laugh. "My dear fellow, the little things I tinker about

with here are not worth half a day out of a young man's life. And besides—do you think it is inventions nowadays that the world needs most of all?"

"Why, what do you think it is, then, Father?"

His young face, so intent on the answer, seemed waiting for something it had long been seeking. But Peer drew back, waving off the question with his hands. Who was he, to say?

"I expect you know more about that matter than I do," he said, smiling. "But we might talk it over when we've seen a little more of each other."

But as they went down toward the cottage again, Peer had a feeling that he owed the boy a better answer, and must give it before long.

All that evening the little house was full of talk and laughter. The young people were told all the wonderful things they had said and done when they were quite little. But Peer had long fits of sitting silent, with downcast eyes. Here was a fine young fellow who had come into his life, his son, and a son, to boot, who was ready to sacrifice himself for him—was actually anxious to take his parents by the hand and lead them to a happier life. But what tasks had he to offer such a son?

At last Louise sat down at the old piano, which seemed so out of place in the little cottage, and played away vigorously as was her wont. Merle leaned forward listening. She would have liked to ask whether her daughter had gone on with violin playing, but she did not.

"You mustn't sit and fidget so while your sister is playing," says Peer. Father and son smile at each other. They seem to have drawn closer to one another since their visit to the smithy.

XII

On a bed made up on a bench in the attic lies a young man, who has lived through so much that day that he tosses hither and thither, and cannot sleep. The attic runs the length of the house, above living-room, bedroom and kitchen; its roof slopes to the floor, it serves as storehouse for both food and clothes. He has slept in saeter-huts before now; but that this should be his parents' home!

He hears his mother's footsteps below. They are moving about cautiously. They are out in the little room where Louise is sleeping; then they come up the stair. It is twilight in the attic; he sees her come in, her face shining with quiet happiness. "I wonder if you will be able to sleep here, my boy?" Her hand strokes his cheek once, and she is gone again. There is something strangely soothing about these footsteps. There is a feeling of peace through the whole house such as he has never known before, and at last he goes to sleep like a child in its cradle.

And out in a little room lies a young girl in a bed that has a paillasse stuffed with hay for a mattress. It crackles cheerily under her every time she moves, and there she lies and laughs. What a doll's house of a home! And these two old people, living here, and seem-

ing to themselves rich in all earthly goods when they do but look at each other—she can't help feeling amused at the thought of it. But now everything will be changed. Of course they must come to Bruseth; she has the whole thing settled; they shall have a cottage of their own, do their own housekeeping and have their own maid. And the croft here shall not be sold, it shall stand as a monument to those two, and perhaps in time be transformed into a Children's Home which shall bear her parents' name. She lies there with the coverlet over her head to keep the flies off, and thinks the whole thing out.

From force of habit she has put her shoes outside the door to be cleaned—one does these things instinctively when one's undressing. Peer is up early, and it is only after he has fetched the luggage from the station on the hand-cart that he stops short in the kitchen, noticing the shoes. Louise! he says to himself. They remind him so vividly of her feet, aye, of her whole self. He ends by taking them up in his hand and looking at them in a kind of rapture—it is no trifle to have had a visit from two such shoes, they seem almost to call him Father.

So down he sits and sets to work, polishes them and puts them back again without a sound; he has to stand and look at them a little once more—it is not every day that one has to handle two such little creatures in a house like this.

After that he steals up the stairs and gets his son's

shoes too, and while he sits polishing them the scene in the smithy yesterday rises vividly before him. "How will you answer him, Peer? Possibly the boy has come because he is in real need of a father. He is laying his fate in your hands. What should you say to him?"

Louise awakens to see her mother standing beside her with a coffee tray. She starts up. "Oh, but Mother! And I had promised myself to get up early and make coffee for you and Father!"

And then Merle goes her way up to a lad who lies with his coverlet thrown off and his feet sticking out from under the sheets. She shakes him—without effect at first. But at last he throws himself over upon his face, rubs his eyes suddenly and turns over on to his back again. "Oh, Mother, is that you!"

And again Merle trembles at the word Mother.

"You have a scar on your neck, my boy. How did you get that?"

"Oh, that was a young horse that flung me on to a fence."

"Ugh! You must have bled a lot?" and his mother touched the scar with her finger.

"I don't remember. It can't have been anything to speak of."

"Do you want shaving water?"

At that he spluttered in his coffee and choked. "Shaving water! Ask Louise! She calls my cheek a baby's bottom. But these waffles of yours, Mother, *are* good."

Louise appears in a light summer frock, white with

dark-blue stripes, a blue sailor's collar, and a knotted blue tie coming right down to her belt. She is in gay humor, and sings as she helps her mother. She waits for a moment when Lorentz is out, so that she may have her parents to herself; and it comes at last.

She stands in the middle of the floor, with her arms behind her back, and asks in the most serious of tones: "Now see here, Mother and Father—will you answer a question frankly?"

"Well?" Both look at her.

"Have you a couple of trunks?"

"Trunks?" They do not understand.

"Yes, to pack your things in. For, of course, you won't let me go back to Bruseth alone?"

Oh—that was it! Both her parents laugh, but not exactly in the way she had expected.

"I have a little cottage standing empty, waiting for you. And I won't come and bother you every day."

"Do you mean that we should come on a visit?" asks Merle.

"Oh yes—on a visit. But you won't be allowed to come back here again."

And now there is a pause she does not like at all. Her parents seem to draw back into themselves as they look at one another. "That's a very big question," says Peer at length. "But of course it is too much for us to accept."

"Well, well, you don't need to answer this very moment," says Louise—she, too, beginning to beat a re-

treat. She sees she has been in too great a hurry again.

"It is rather sudden!" says Merle. "And there are so many things to consider. But you are not going off again just at once?"

"Perhaps not," answers Louise, giving them each a pat on the cheek. "Only I thought it would be so horrid to be parted again."

Another hot summer day! Louise sings, as if to conjure away a cloud; Lorentz carries wood and water for his mother, and she and he often stop and whisper together. He has no idea that she is coaxing more secrets out of him than he would care to tell. Peer has begun to follow Louise about and match his voice with hers—it is quite a new thing for him to have a grown-up daughter to flirt with; they have a dance together, and end up with playing touch-last round the room. She runs with swishing skirts, then twirls round, and runs backward, calling out teasingly, "Catch me if you can!" "Just you wait!" he pants, trying to put speed into his stiff old legs. But now she is off in earnest, and next moment she is round the corner. There she stands still and begins teasing him again. "You must be good, do you hear! and get Mother to come to Bruseth!" "Oh, you serpent!" But at last he catches her, and then they grapple and try to throw each other.

When the old folk were in bed that night, and all was quiet in the house, Merle asked, "Well, what do you think of this that Louise spoke of?"

Peer was silent for a time. "I believe you would like to go."

"In a way—yes. We have not seen too much of them."

"But have you considered that Louise has nothing except what she got from the widow at Bruseth?"

"No, that's true of course. Perhaps it would not be very pleasant." And both lie there thinking it over.

On the third day Lorentz is wandering about outside, whistling, when he hears his sister shout "Hullo" from up in the little barn. He steals up the barn-bridge. "Who's there?" asks a severe voice. But he is so far already that he catches a glimpse of her doing gymnastics in her combinations, her dark hair hanging down her back in a heavy plait. "Off you go!" And next moment a bit of wood whistles past his ear. But no sooner is he down again than he hears an authoritative: "Wait a moment, idiot! I have something to speak to you about." Presently she sticks her head out. "Now you may come."

He finds her sitting on a chest in her light summer frock, with a cigarette just lighted, twisting up her hair on the back of her head.

"Look here, a word with you in earnest—I must get home."

"I expected that."

"We mustn't eat them out of house and home—and they won't take any help."

"Have you asked them?"

"It's a kind of pride I don't understand a bit. Goodness knows whether they'll even come on a visit. Do you understand it?"

"I can understand their having a pride of their own."

"And you?" She looked at him. "Are you coming home with me?"

"I was thinking of a walking tour."

"And after that?"

"I haven't made up my mind. I must have a little more talk with Father."

She gazed in front of her for a time. At last, "Then I suppose it's your idea that I'm to carry on alone at Bruseth?"

"Is that such a hard fate?"

"I didn't say so. But I see that from now on you will have a home here—and that no one will want me."

"That's a bad business!"

"Yes, *you* take it very calmly. All the same, there is one thing you must help me about. We must find a servant for Mother."

"But if they won't accept . . ."

She interrupted him: "They'll just have to accept this. But it must be someone that knows her way about, and can spend a few shillings without their suspecting anything. You must come with me to the village and try and help me to arrange it?"

Lorentz was uneasy. He saw that it would not do for

him either to stay on here, but what *was* he to do?

That same day he was helping his father to drag a sack of flour home from the store on the hand-cart, and when they got inside the gate they sat down to take breath.

"See here, Father," began Lorentz; "have you thought any more about what I proposed to you up in the smithy?"

His father smiled. "Does it seem to you a thing I ought to think over?"

"Is there no way you can make use of me, Father?"

His father picked up a blade of grass. Then he sat silent for a time, and said at last: "My dear boy, I would have to be an even greater egoist than I am, if I thought there was. If we two were to join hands and some day actually produce something that should sweep competition from the field—do you think we should be doing the world any service? Hundreds of thousands of shrewd heads are busy in workshops and laboratories trying to brood out something new; and what is the result? Better types of men? No. Only more wants, more machines, more industry, a bigger and bigger factory proletariat, to be always grumbling and striking and making disturbances. Multiplication of thralls, not of human beings. Steel, my boy, is a terrible beast of prey; it demands to be fed with human lives. It makes one rich and a thousand poor. It makes none happy, but, on the contrary, millions unhappy. I have good reason to know it."

"But you yourself, Father? You are always busy thinking out inventions, are you not?"

His father smiled. "Yes, but then I am one of the victims. I have got caught up in it, and cannot tear myself free. When I get a harrow to patch up, I may come upon a new problem in the old crock, and before I know what I am doing, I am wrestling with it. Besides, it's the only way I can keep my poor brain awake. I cannot read, you know." And he bit the grass-blade and gazed out through his spectacles.

After a time, he looked at his son and went on: "You are disappointed, I suppose? No doubt you expected more help from your father?"

Lorentz pressed his hand to his forehead for a moment. "What . . . what would you take up then, Father, if you were me?"

Peer felt that the boy's eyes were fixed on him, and that this time he had to answer.

"Nothing in the engineering way, at any rate."

"But what then?"

"See here, Lorentz—have you and your companions no interest in religion?"

The question was so unexpected that Lorentz turned toward him involuntarily.

"No. That is to say, at school we had a scripture lesson once a week, of course. That's all I have had to do with such things."

His father began to laugh. Then Lorentz laughed too.

"But the young fellows—in your set?"

"Politics and sport were all we thought of."

"And yet I tell you that the day is not far off, when people will be tired of nationalism, and class war, and all our machine civilization. Then they will turn back to the Temple again. And then—the thing is to have it ready."

"The Temple? Do you mean the church?"

"I did not mean the church as it is to-day. Nor Christianity either, as it is to-day. I said the Temple. And he who shall build it up in its new likeness is he for whom the world is waiting. Be sure of one thing: the vision of the divine will always flame up afresh . . . Well, there's Mother calling us."

But as they set the cart in motion, Peer went on, "If I were young, my boy—I know well enough what I would be. . . ."

"A priest?" Lorentz did not know how astonished he looked.

"Yes; don't you think the world is beautiful enough to make the idea tempting? But you must remember that this is not advice. I only said, it it were me."

And then the cart began to move.

It struck Louise that evening that her brother was very silent. At length he went out, and he stayed away till the others had gone to bed. When she heard him creep upstairs, she waited a while, then pulled on a dressing-gown and slipped after him.

He was between the sheets already, and she sat down on the edge of his bed.

"What is it you're going about hatching, my boy?"

"Ah." He pretended to yawn.

"I've been to the village and settled that matter."

"Oh, but I was to go with you?"

"You went off with Father. What do you two talk about?"

"Oh, various things."

"I am not fit to be told, I suppose?"

He laughed a little. She went on:

"You have slipped farther and farther away from me since we came here. I suppose there's something special going on in your head just now?"

"Hm."

"Well, I am leaving to-morrow. And perhaps it will be some time before we see each other again?"

"Maybe you're right about that."

"Perhaps we are come to where our roads part—we two?"

"Hm."

"And you will have your home here. And live in a world where values are quite different. And you'll see that you'll be the richer of us two, after all."

"What nonsense."

She pressed his hand. "Now listen, Lo—you mustn't forget the years when it was . . . it was we two together." She bent her head, and there was a catch in her voice.

"No, but my dear girl . . ."

"Things won't be so easy for me after this. This

coming up here has unsettled me so. I seem to have partly lost our mother at Bruseth; and I have not got my parents here back again. They will have nothing to do with me. I suppose they think there is something not quite right about anyone who is the heir of the woman they . . . feel both gratitude and loathing for. And I dare say I shall lose you too, Lo. But . . . but all the same you must remember that you have a sister in your old home who . . . who misses you."

Then she said good-night and slipped quietly down to her little room again.

Next day she left.

Her father had made her a present of a whisk he had made himself. She ruffled up his beard with it and laughed. Her mother brought her a little box, and in it lay a bracelet of amber. "It was my mother's," she said. "And I shall never wear it again."

Tears came into Louise's eyes, and she threw her arms round her mother's neck. "It is you and Father who are giving presents," said she. "That wasn't the idea at all."

And so Peer and Merle stood once more at the station as the train went off, and Louise waved out of the carriage window.

So had she gone away from them before, when she was a very little girl, and many and long were the years that lay between.

Here was Lorentz standing with them still, but he

too would go in a day or two, no doubt. Grown-up children are never with one for more than a visit. They pass into the land of memories and letters.

Lorentz stayed a couple of days longer, but it did not seem to him that he drew much nearer to his parents. They seldom asked about the years he had passed at Bruseth—no doubt it was a sore subject. Of their own life during those years they said little, but it was not difficult to guess what it had been. And so, while the three were no less happy in their reunion than at first, yet long silences would fall between them every now and again. Lorentz dreaded the thought of leaving. He could not help the two old people, and he himself had to go out into the unknown.

And so the day came. His father was up early and brushed his boots, his mother packed his rucksack with food. And both went with him a bit of the way. He said he wanted to make a tour through the Jotunheim, but on his way back he would come round this way again.

And when the old folk stopped to turn back, his mother warned him to be careful and not get lost in the mountains, and, when he had found a lodging in the evening, he must remember to put on a woollen vest. As he stood with his father's hand in his, he looked into the seamed face, brightened now with a curious smile. "Well, well, my boy, it will all come right in the end. But you have no stick. Here, you shall have mine." It was a birch stick with a knot in the wood for a handle. Lorentz took it, and tried it in his hand. "But what

about you, Father?" "My dear fellow, I can make myself another. You too must have something your father has given you."

Good-by then. They set off in opposite directions.

He turned round more than once. He saw his mother with her handkerchief to her eyes. Then she turned and waved. His father swung his hat once only, and then hastened on, as though he wished to get it all over. The two figures grew less and less as they passed down the road.

Lorentz struck into a mountain path that led higher and higher up into the hills. An hour later he stood and looked back. Deep below in the valley bottom, the river wound its blue-green ribbon. The farms lay baking in the sun on the green slopes. And, on a croft which he should know, there rose a thin streak of smoke from a little gray-brown cottage.

XIII

Lorentz walked on with his cap and jacket in his rucksack, stopping now and again to look round him. The wind chased great masses of cloud across the sky, and broad shifting shadow-landscapes drifted over hill and dale. He went by the last houses, up above the pine-ridges, then climbed the birch-grown slopes, till at last he was out on the uplands themselves, with a different air, fresh and thin and cool, blowing on his face. If he turns now he sees on the farther side of the valley a world of gray and blue-brown mountain melting, wave upon wave, farther and farther into the distance, with here and there a white snow-comb against the sky. It is the first time he has been up among the real high mountains, and they are something to look at, indeed.

But this landscape is still new and strange, and it bears no relation to what is working and seething within him. It is as though all that he has cared for till now had been left behind him—Louise, Bruseth, his comrades, his ideas. He feels as if he had been driven out into a new land, where as yet he is homeless and quite alone. His parents had seemed to be the last refuge left him; but he could not settle down with them, he could not get close enough to them—no doubt, it was

too late. The years of childhood when one's whole mind turns of itself toward one's parents—once missed, they are not easy to recover. That first day in the smithy, when, overwhelmed by the tragedy of his father's fate, he had been ready to make any sacrifice to help him, his offer had not been accepted as he had hoped. Oh no, a little boy can climb up into his father's lap, but a grown-up son must find some other way to draw near to him, and that is not easy. Well, now he has been to his parents, and it seems that they have no key to give which shall help him to solve his riddles. They are living in the sunset of their days, and perhaps no more can be said or done. But is that so? Has his visit to them been fruitless?

That is what he is considering now. After all, he is not the same to-day as when he came up here. His eyes have been opened to things he had never known before. Mother, father! They have become new words for him. He is wondering whether his mother has to help his father to carry in the corn-poles in autumn; he sees her back bending under the load, and he wishes he could be there to bear the whole burden for them both.

On in the day he dips his head into a stream and drinks; then he takes off shoes and stockings and sits with his feet in the cool, living water. Ah; delicious! Now for Mother's provender; it is no little thing to eat bread and butter and waffles that mother has spread. Mother! Wonderful word. At last it has a meaning for

him too; it is like a melody once sung and then forgotten, welling up anew within him. Mother! He had never dreamed that there were human beings that gave out such an atmosphere of blessedness. And yet to draw closer to her, to stay beside her, is not for him. Too late is too late. And here in his hand is the stick that is his father's gift. Thanks for the food, Mother!

Those two are living in the sunset—perhaps no more can be said or done—and yet their son sits here meditating whether there is not some way to save them from what lies before them. It is easy enough to think of moving them to Bruseth; it is easy enough to want to help father with his work—only they won't accept such help. It is something quite different, something personal and precious he is scheming to save for them as he sits here. And what is this thing? Wait a little, perhaps he will get to the bottom of it yet.

The New Temple, his father said. Priest, he said. It sounded so hopelessly impossible when he said the words, and so it seems to Lorentz still. Priest? Are the heavens up yonder anything but air and ether; and father Jahveh, the ever judging and punishing and forgiving potentate—is he anything but a comic character? Temple? Dear Father, you surely don't want me to go and be a theologian? At the very thought he breaks into a joyous laugh.

Then he gets up, puts on shoes and stockings, and tramps on again. In the evening he comes to a mountain sanatorium and stops there for the night. It is full

of guests. After supper there is dancing, and Lorentz joins in. Next morning he can have company if he likes, but a man can be company for himself sometimes.

A saeter-girl stands by a fence milking a goat. "Good-day!" she hears, and a bareheaded and sunburnt young man stands there smiling at her. "Ugh, you frightened me!" she says, laughing. "Shall I come and frighten you a little more?" says he, making a show of coming in by the gate; but he gives it up and wanders on. Wood-cutters in the forest hear a voice say, "Good luck to the work!" A young fellow with a knapsack stands looking at the felled timber with a knowledgeable eye. "It'll be dry by winter, I suppose?" "Aye, if the weather holds." "Are you paid by the cord?" "We are that." "Aye, aye—good-day then." He smiles a farewell. They follow him with their eyes. He looks as if his thoughts are anywhere but with his words.

All the time, as he goes, he is with his parents in thought. "Did you notice how pleased they were with little things? And how they would look at each other as if they had got engaged the day before. They did not make their living out of discontent. They did not need a revolution to show them life's values. They did not look for everything at the hands of 'society.' Oh yes, they had learned how to live the deep, inward life, those two." He seems behind all this to divine some new music, which he strains his ear to catch. "Must it die with those two? Or can you rescue it and learn to play

it out loud before the whole wide world? What if you could? Then you would draw near to them indeed. Then you could bring them help. Then they could help you too. What if you could?"

One evening at sunset he is standing on a mountain ridge looking about him. Around him is a world of mosses, glistening tarn, stretches of dun upland, blue mountain—rising, falling, like the ocean itself, league upon league, till all dies away in the flaming west. There is no wind here, not so much as the tinkle of a beck, and yet—what music. He stands here looking out over the mighty picture till he loses himself. And again the landscape's deep rhythm seems to surge upon him, to engulf him and make him one with mountain, sky, and sunset glow. But this time his parents are with him too, and the new forces they have awakened in him, and now the billows take up the whole in their rhythm, carry it away as on long, lessening rollers, and sweep it back again, greater, richer. His inmost soul lies before him as a landscape in the setting sun, silent, as if all things listened. "The New Temple? Come hither, Father. Priest? Come hither, Mother. If one had but a great bell up yonder under the sky and could ring, ring, out over the whole wide earth: listen, poor humankind—there is a wondrous thing in this world. There are Mother and Father. There are beauty and goodness. What the old have suffered, the young shall sanctify. That is their inheritance. In that they shall

grow rich. Lift it up toward heaven like a gateway of the sun, build for it a Temple, call it God!"

So he stands a while, then moves on toward the twilight.

XIV

But a few days later he heard the ringing of a real bell, and never had it gone home to him as it did now.

A solitary parish lies far in among the mountains. In the bottom of the broad valley, a river has spread out into a lake, gray-white with the ice-water from the glaciers of Jotunheim. Round it, on green slopes, lie farms, and it is on one of the largest of these that Lorentz awakens on a Sunday morning. Into the big room with its bare log walls streams of golden sunlight pour through the windows, and he rubs his eyes and tumbles out on to the floor. "What a morning!" he thinks, as he goes and opens a window and leans out.

Never had he seen the sun blaze down from a bluer sky. He drinks in air, clear as crystal, spiced with the scent of pine woods, of clover and timothy-grass from the meadows. It is dead calm, and the smoke stands straight heaven-ward from the chimneys of the farm. Cockcrowing everywhere, and everywhere peace. And in this moment it is as though he were freed of all that till now has weighed upon him; the dazzling day pours into his soul, making all within light and summer. On the opposite side of the lake lie two large farms—one is a summer boarding-house—and yesterday evening, when he arrived, he has seen young women in light

dresses frisking about on the slopes below. Even now they seem to him part of the picture—though they are not to be seen for the moment—all is so beautiful that they must needs be part of it.

And as he leans there in the open window, listening, as it were, to the very sigh of the hot summer day, heaven and earth seem to tremble with expectation, aye, his own senses begin to quiver with the strain of listening for something that must soon come to pass. And in the next moment the suspense breaks in a distant sound of bells. It must be church bells. Over the house roofs and the pine-tops near the end of the lake he sees the brown tower pointing to the sky, with its gilt vane glittering in the sun. The church is old as the hills and famed for its old carvings and decorations; and now it is calling on the parish, to-day as it has done all these hundreds of years, through good times and bad. There is something of motherly care in this call; the parish breathes worship, mountains and meadows are hallowed. He seems now, for the first time, to discover that life has grown fuller and more manifold for him of late, and now the bells ring over this fuller life and transform it to festival. He remembers the autumn evenings at Bruseth when the landscape lay there and sang, but he heard it alone then; he thinks of the evening at sunset up among the mountains, but only his parents were with him then. Now these bells seem to call together one and all, the living and the dead, all ages, all folks. "Come, come, come."

He lifts his head that his face may be in fuller sunshine, shuts his eyes, feels within him how unutterably blue is the sky. But listen! How it rings, rings, rings! All that his thought touches seems to be caught up and made solemn. Behind all mankind is the universe itself. All suns and stars hasten on their way to the same rhythm, inspired by the same light as the soul of man. The smallest insect is akin to the greatest solar system, the ragged beggar and the Milky Way are brethren. And behind the visible world is the spiritual, still greater, still richer, and behind that again the moral world, the greatest and richest of all. "God knows whether every human soul has not solar systems of its own—where at this moment are your own thoughts?"

Priest? Aye, on such a day as this he could be willing enough to mount a pulpit. He remembers his father's words: "Don't you think the world is beautiful enough for that?" Oh yes, if that were what it meant to be a priest, he would be one. To ring men together to worship, to make the suns in their souls shine in full glory. "God? A word only! In every man there must be currents of life, of aspiration and longing, of suffering and rejoicing, which it must be possible to call together in a great and noble temple-rite. Is mankind waiting for this? Can *you* do it? Will you? Dare you? Think, if you could!"

An hour later he is on his way to the church. As he nears the little cluster of houses at the end of the lake his steps grow slower. It's well that no one knows him

here. He thinks of the great lady of Bruseth, who hated priests and churches, and of his comrades in the city. They looked on all religion as nothing but a sort of morphia that the rich administer to make the poor forget. And here he is going to church himself. Yes, but simply out of curiosity. Surely he may see what it looks like at closer quarters. He has not set foot in a church for as long as he can remember.

Through the sun-blistered lich-gate a few peasant men and women are moving slowly into the churchyard, and among the tombstones wander one or two, thinking of a relative lying below. The church bells ring and ring, a warning that once the dead were as you, and that some day you will be as they. Soon the sound of a hoarse organ and of a few voices singing is heard from inside. Lorentz sets foot on the stone steps and goes in.

There are only a few people scattered among the rows of pews, but he feels straightway that here one must be silent and walk quietly. He breathes in temple air. He seats himself and folds his hands upon his knee. He is anxious to see whether the high visions and feelings, which streamed in upon him as he opened the window that morning to admit the glorious day, will find expression here.

What, in fact, is Christianity, he asks himself; and tries to remember a little of what he had learned as a child. The whole of mankind was condemned to everlasting torment on account of an apple, but after some

thousands of years the all-loving God sent his son to earth that he might be crucified for the sake of all. Whoever after this believes that this is true will be saved after death. How things have gone with the millions who must have lived and died before, is a thing Christianity does not trouble itself about. Is this religion as it is to-day?

Through the little windows high up in the walls he has glimpses of blue sky, and of swallows darting to and fro. But in here the light is very dim, and, from the famous old works of peasant art on the walls, the imaginations of far-off times stare down at him. These paintings, these carvings, are the Bible, bodied forth in fear and trembling. But what beautiful living tints, what fervor, what humble bowing down of the human spirit! On the panels of the pulpit are paintings of the Ascension contrasted with the misery of life on earth—and of the Virgin Mary, with angels kneeling and raising their eyes to heaven. It may be that these were once a true expression of the human soul's devotion and longing, but it must have been long ago. They express neither the feeling nor thought of modern man. Later he joins in the singing; but this is a failure: the words are dreadful, and the organ tears your ears to tatters. Are religious people satisfied with this nowadays, or is there no religion any more? And now he remembers that there is a political meeting farther up the valley, and thinks it not so strange that most people have preferred to go there.

But at the same time he sees that the people in the pews about him seem to take on a new aspect as they sing. In spite of all shortcomings, the spirit of devotion flows into them. Their eyes fill with a light that is not of everyday. Probably they are not thinking of the words, but the music sets free an answering resonance in their souls.

And next the priest is in the pulpit. "Now listen, Lorentz. Now you are to hear the Christianity of today."

Above the dark gown with its white ruff rises the head of a middle-aged man, with fair hair and full beard. But hardly has he appeared before them when the faces round about take on again their dull everyday look, and all eyes seem ready to close in slumber.

After the prayer, he begins to read the text for the day from St. Mark. It is about the scribes and Pharisees who upbraid Jesus and his disciples for not washing their hands before they sit down to meat. "Aye," thinks Lorentz—"there I agree with the Pharisees. Surely it can be no part of Christianity to eat with dirty hands?" But hear how the Son of God reproves and chides them for their words. "Ye hypocrites," he says. "You despise the commandments of God"—and so on. Lorentz thinks again, "Can this be religion?"

Then the priest begins to explain and interpret these words of God in perfect seriousness. Soon he is droning away as usual about sin, mercy, and salvation through the blood of Christ. This matter of the washing of

hands before going to meat sticks in Lorentz's head. He thinks, "He who objected so strongly to washing his hands—is he our Savior?"

He looks up at the windows again with their little, leaded panes; one of them is open, and out beyond is the blue sky and the flights of swallows. But inside here one is in a museum of religious pictures, hymns, texts, and exposition. And round about him every face is dull and sleepy. The voice from the pulpit means nothing to them. They are only waiting for it to stop.

A row or two in front of him there sits a young girl in a light-colored dress, with a dark plait hanging down her back. Who knows whether her mother has not sat up last night to finish the dress, and the red bow under the girl's chin, that matches the flame in her ruddy cheeks? Lorentz feels an impulse to take her by the hand and go up to the priest and say: "The religion you preach does not concern any of us who are alive to-day. We do not wish to be saved by the blood of Christ. If we have done anything wrong, we will answer for it ourselves. And in any case we would rather not be saved from the world and our own flesh. Life here is a joy. Have you no eyes, priest, for the blinding summer day outside? If you would give us a hymn to the sun, then young men and women would flock here and sing it in chorus, and all would feel that Our Lord is young. Good God, how cold and musty and murky it is in your church, and how homeless you make us feel, both old and young!"

But the priest drones on without misgiving. He dives into the old Jewish myths, and believes that the living God can still be found in them.

Lorentz listens no longer. No one in the church is listening any more. Again Lorentz looks at the works of art upon the walls. A curator of museums would no doubt find it interesting, and would talk of rococo and baroque. But it is not to study cultural history that most people come here. They look at the pictures in the belief that they body forth a religion by which they themselves are in duty bound to mold their lives and their conceptions. But these holy men and women bring to mind only the suffering and martyrdom of life; they show life as a pilgrimage through torments, if one would end in heaven. God is shown forth bleeding on a cross, his adversary is seen everywhere as an evil mask with a tongue protruding from open jaws. Is this what is taught in our temples to-day? No praise of labor, of the joy of life, of love, of fruitfulness, of the pomp and eternal youth of the universe. He who hates not his father and his mother for my sake—says the Master somewhere. Exactly like the young Communist leader! Destroy all natural feelings and you will find salvation. Lorentz thinks of his parents. He remembers the sense of eternity that flooded the soul with rich harmonies at the sight of the Bruseth country-side, or this morning at the open window. A sun-steeped rapture in living. Alien to Christianity. In the eyes of Christianity a sin! "No, Father was right," he thinks. "This religion

has doomed itself. If man to-day is to find vent for the godlike forces in his soul, he must build new temples and worship a new God. No wonder that the churches stand empty."

He bends his head in thought. He sees himself as reformer, as a revolutionary among priests. But alas! there have been so many of them. It is so easy to pull a thing down. But have you anything to build up in its place?

He notices at length that people are getting up, and that all is over, and he follows them out as in a dream. He remembers again that blessed hour in the morning, when the chiming bells drew all things under their consecration, till the very landscape seemed hallowed, seemed spiritualized. But to go to church had only been to lose it all.

XV

SHALL he go on with his tour or settle down here for a while? There is still a month before the university opens again, and is it quite certain that he means to take up law?

No doubt harvest has begun at Bruseth by now. He thinks of the happy, busy life in harvest time, young men and women hulloing upon the hillsides while the hay is raked together, and the thunder from the barn-bridges as load after load is driven up them. A fresh warm smell of hay, and of man and beast, hangs over the whole farm. What if he went back now and helped his sister? As if she wanted his help! Or to his parents? They too have someone to help them; Louise has seen to that. And besides, he cannot meet Louise again for a while. Nor his parents either. There is something he must clear up by himself first. He has drifted into a realm of new realities; he is still homeless there, it's true, but some day he too must surely find a roof for his head. What is religion?

He went for long tramps, forgot his meals, came home when the other people in the house had gone to rest. It is a strange feeling to be so completely free. When he lies down under a tree on the hillside, there is no reason why he should be in a hurry to get up

again. He sees the future in a mist, and looks back on the past. A young Communist comes toward him—it is himself, and he nods to him. You were right in a way. But you understood a part only. You did not see what lies at the root of things. What is religion?

One day he sees coming toward him on the road a red-haired young fellow in a white sailor-hat, and he stops suddenly. The other does the same. A smile spreads over the youth's round face. "Is it really you?" he says. "That's just what *I* want to know. Can it be you?"

It was Ragnar Falk, a fellow oarsman in the university rowing club; a scapegrace who should have passed his law examination long ago; but his mother was rich and he had too many lady friends. At the big regatta last spring Lorentz and he had pulled well, but two of their crew had been on the spree the night before, with the result that might have been expected. And now the two are standing here far away among the mountains, shaking hands.

Falk tells him that there are a lot of young people from the city up here, at the pastor's house, at the sheriff's, and in the boarding-houses round about. "And to-morrow we're going on an excursion," he says, "and of course you must come too."

"Are the girls pretty?"

"Some of them."

"At close quarters too?"

"I haven't been closer to any of them than across the table. But at that distance some of them are quite passable."

"But I don't know any of them."

"That's easily set right. Besides it's to be a historical pageant."

"What—historic?"

"Yes, not in national costume with cithern [1] and so forth, but in the vehicles of our fathers, carioles, dog-carts, and gigs. We are to picnic in the open air far up in the next parish."

The band of young folks gathered the next day, and divided themselves among a varied lot of old-fashioned traps, drawn by big-bellied horses that had almost forgotten how to trot. There were fair, and dark, and red heads under straw hats and white caps; bright frocks and gray suits; sunburnt faces and happy ringing voices. Their way led up along the narrow country road between the lake and the steep hillside; there was food and wine in baskets and rucksacks; and most of them had hardly a notion where they were going. They met an omnibus motor-car which forced them over the edge of the road as it whizzed by, and they cheered the motor to the echo. For a time they drove too fast, then they forgot all about the horses, who first slowed down to a walk and then came to a dead stop. This was the

[1] Langeleik—an old Norse stringed instrument.

cue for a round of cheers for the horses; visits were paid from carriage to carriage, wine was drunk, they climbed into one another's traps and sang songs.

After the agitations of the weeks just past, it seemed to-day to Lorentz as if he had strayed into a world all youth and summer. Oh, what it was to feel free and feather-pated again! In the driver's seat of his cariole was a young woman from the city, a tall, high-colored girl, with great dark eyes. Over her dark hair she wore a lace scarf, tied under her chin, so that she looked like a young blooming nun. Every time he said something impudent she dropped her eyes, shook her head and laughed. She had suffered from a weak chest, and was living at the pastor's up here for the sake of the pure air; and her red-haired sister was with her to see that she took good care of herself.

Is it really he who is sitting here with a madonna like this in front of him, and is he not beginning to lose his head already? First he is ready to swear that this one anyhow shall not catch him; soon he is wondering if she is free; then he has to admit that she is quite charming; and finally he feels like proclaiming to the world that it will either be she or no one. After they have been driving for half an hour Lorentz begins to sing on his own account. But further behind he catches sight of a little maiden with a gentle face under smooth flaxen hair. The sight silences him; and then his eye falls on one or two still farther behind, and he has to begin singing again.

When they got to the head of the lake they were caught in a drenching shower of rain; and he jumped up on the box of the cariole and proposed they should all sing: "I gaze at the sun." [1] Most of the girls were soon in their rain-coats, and while the rain poured down in torrents, drumming on lake and shore, the whole company sang louder and ever louder, "I gaze at the sun."

They came to a gate right across the road, and Falk had to get down to open it. But first he must see whether he could jump it. He took a good run and cleared it. Bravo! they cried, and next moment Lorentz flew over too. After this, of course the other youths must get out and jump too, but finally one went head-first into the ditch and another hung sprawling across the gate, and on that the game stopped of itself.

Toward midday they drove up to an old farmstead lying on a grassy slope. There were three dwelling-houses with sun-baked wooden walls and dark-red window frames. In the grass-grown courtyard they were welcomed by two young girls in peasant dress with long fair plaits.

"They've got cream porridge for us here," said Falk.

But when they had settled down on the benches round the long table in one of the big rooms and were just starting on the buttery mess, the sun came out and shone into the room, and it was Falk again who got up and said it was a shame to sit eating indoors on a

[1] "The Saeter-girl's Sunday"—one of Ole Bull's songs.

summer day. And next moment he was making for the door with his plate in his hands and his spoon in his mouth.

The two peasant girls who were waiting looked at each other and laughed. Standing in the door of another of the houses were the old father and mother of the farm folk, a man and woman of eighty years or so, in their old-fashioned Sunday clothes. And now they see these townsfolk rush laughing and shouting, one after another, carrying their food, out into the courtyard and on into the fields, where they dump down on the sward or on to hay-cocks and go on eating their porridge.

Lorentz had sat down where he could lean backward and lay his head in the lap of his friend of the cariole. "Take care now," she says, "that I don't pour a spoonful of porridge down your neck." "If you do, I'll have my revenge," says he. "How?" "You'll see." And he turns his head and meets her eyes.

"Lilly!" called her red-haired sister, "you mustn't sit there on that hay-cock; you'll get wet."

"Oh, do look out for yourself."

Lorentz lies with his head upon the young woman's lap, staring at the mountains, which here come closer and thrust their giddy heights into the sky above. There is the sound of a waterfall, scents rise from grass and hay, round him are the shouts and laughter of young men and women, drunken with the day, with the summer, and with each other.

A young poet in white trousers and straw hat was standing with a glass in his hand about to begin a speech, when a gramophone in the house below began to splutter.

A dance! They all rushed across the grass and into the house with their empty plates in their hands.

And Lorentz danced with his young woman of the cariole. What rhythm there was in this young, shapely body! Her back yielded a little under the pressure of his arm, she leaned her head backward and glided round with closed eyes. Had she danced till she was over-heated some time in the winter and taken cold upon a balcony—and was that why she had had to come up here to drink of the air and the milk, and grow stout again and escape from death? Maybe, but she had forgotten all about it now—in this dance with a young man whose arm lay so close about her waist.

"Lilly!" her sister cries, "you mustn't get too hot!"

"Shall we stop?" asks Lorentz. She sways on with closed eyes, whispering: "No!"

Suddenly the old grandfather and his wife appear in the doorway, leaning on their sticks. They laugh a little doubtfully, but maybe they remember the old days of the fiddle and the spring-dance.

Presently Lorentz went and made his bow to the old woman. She screamed and asked him if he were mad, but at the same instant his partner came up and carried the old man off. There was no getting out of it then—and all the young people stood still, clapping

their hands, while the two old folks with their young partners took a couple of turns round the room. When they stopped, Lorentz and the girl looked at one another, and it was as though this dance with the two old people had drawn them nearer to each other.

In the evening the wheels rattled down along the lakeside once more. There was no end to the jollity now: some would jump down to run a race with the horses, others climb on to their friends' traps, to be pushed off into the road again. Lorentz was in front now with his young friend in their cariole.

"Lilly," cried her sister from a carriage farther back in the line, "be sure you draw your shawl well round you."

Suddenly Lorentz pulls up his horse, and the whole procession has to stop.

"What is it?" many voices ask.

Lorentz answers: "It's Lilly—Fröken Mörk, I mean —she has dropped a pin."

There is a burst of laughter.

"How naughty of you!" protested the girl. "Do drive on!"

He looked at the flushed, laughing face as she turned her head toward him. Her mouth was like red strawberries.

From below, the widening valley seemed coming to meet them in the dim-lit summer night. Great trees stretched their branches over their heads; the lake lay still as glass, mirroring rosy clouds.

A voice from one of the last carriages called out, "Herr Alme!"

Lorentz looked round. "Well?"

"Kiss Lilly!"

At once there was a jubilant chorus. "Yes, yes, he must kiss Lilly."

"It shall be done!" he answered, but on the instant she leaned forward and escaped him. "Yes, try if you can!" she laughed.

Then for a time silence fell upon them all. Only the footfalls of the horses and the rattle of the wheels was to be heard. Then someone far back in the procession began to sing, "Amid mountains and cliffs"; then a few others joined in, and at last the whole happy company were singing out into the silent night.

Dawn was beginning when Lorentz waded along the margin of the hay fields up to the farm where he was staying.

The whole country-side was asleep—the mountains rose above him belted with blue mist-wreaths, but above the highest snow-flecked peaks the eastern sky was touched with red and yellow flame—sunrise was close at hand.

He is a little bemused, but this time with fun and frolic. He is intoxicated, but not with wine. He is in love, but not with one alone; he feels himself surrounded with draperies, light-blue, red, and white, and he longs to open his embrace to all that is beautiful in the world. He brushes through some timothy-grass and

gets his hands full of the seed, rubs his face with it, and stops to laugh. At last he flings himself down on the sward of a mown patch of hillside, puts his hands behind his head and shuts his eyes. All he has seen and gone through that day is still throbbing through soul and sense.

What is religion?

He sees a young God striding through eternity scattering suns and stars. He is spring and he is frolic and song, he is the earth's rich increase, and he is the trysting-hour when young man and maiden meet. Is that all? "Will you be his priest? Dare you? Will you? Can you? Are you the regenerator of religion for whom the world waits?" He sees himself entering the new, majestic Temple, while the great hymn of eternity, instinct in all the earth and in the soul of man, bursts forth from choir and organ.

Priest?

At that moment his thoughts go back to the young woman of the cariole, who bears in her the germs of wasting and decline. To-day the air and the milk up here have made her ruddy and blooming, but . . . but she will go back again to the city and perhaps be careless—and then one day the crematorium will claim her.

What then?

There is no reason why man should awake to a second life. Oh no! But at that he sits up suddenly and hides his face in his hands.

A new murmur sounds in his ears, this time from the myriads who died, dreaming of a future life. Maybe they were mistaken. Oh yes! But it would be a yet more wonderful thing if they were indeed mistaken—if that were so he feels he might be fain to turn aside and be mistaken along with them. They lived a few years, then they descended into earth and disappeared, but they passed on to those they left behind a flower, a hope of reunion, of a resurrection to something richer and more beautiful than that which is upon the earth. They had learned of it, perhaps, like him, some autumn evening, as they sat gazing over a mighty landscape and hearkened to the organ music of eternity.

And above, through the everlasting, strides the same young God; and now his sway is somewhat wider than it was a short time since; for his face is half-turned away toward a mystery that none can fathom. Of it mankind can only dream, while they cling to something they call faith.

Will you be his priest? Dare you?

When at length he moves on, he plucks the Michaelmas [1] daisies by his path and binds them into a nosegay.

And as at last he lies in his bed on the edge of slumber, he feels the first rays of the sun upon his face. But his dreams take him back among the young folk driving downward by the lake. The young woman in

[1] In Norwegian called *Praeste-krave*—priest's ruff.

front of him in the cariole is the same as before, and yet she seems already to belong to another world; but this time she lets him kiss her, and soon they two are floating, floating onward, to meet the morning.

BOOK II

I

TIMBER-PRICES were falling.

And Louise sat in her private office, forgetful of her writing, staring thoughtfully out of the window.

It is all very fine to have many people about you giving good advice, but not so pleasant when you see through the advice to what lies behind it. That Herr Prahl should be so eager for her to mark and fell more than usual this year, was simply enough explained: was not his son setting up in London as a timber agent, and needing, no doubt, both timber and credit? She had discovered a reason, too, why the inspector of forests, on his part, was so persistent in advising her to mark less timber. He was in the pocket of a firm of timber merchants in the city, and was constantly hinting that he had a buyer, if she would only sell half the forest as it stood.

Ravens would come, the lawyer had said, but—what of himself? He had been up here lately by way of giving her assistance—commissioners from the parishes that got their light from her power-house had been here to see her. They had sought a reduction in the dues; and they evidently expected that, now the widow of Bruseth was gone, things would go smoothly for them. The lawyer, too, had urged her to give way. But

she knew that almost everywhere people were paying a higher rate per unit—why then should she make a reduction? She said as much to them; and thereupon one of them who was a teacher, and a politician, began to threaten. "You private capitalists are playing a dangerous game, Fröken. Suppose the communes were to take the matter into their own hands?" "Well," she said, "do so by all means! Where the State or the commune has developed the water-power themselves, we all know how much the cost of light has fallen! Your district can set about it at once, for what I care." But when he hinted that the State would soon have to take over all property needed for social services, perhaps without a single penny of compensation, she began to laugh, and nodded toward the door: "Now see here—if the commune you represent wants to do business with me, they will have to send someone else. Discussion between us two would only waste time. Good morning!"

"You are jesting with very serious matters!" lamented Herr Prahl, when they were alone. "Yes," she said, with the brightest of faces. "And I'll jest a little with you next time." "Indeed! In what way?" "Well, I'm beginning to understand why the conservatives are never capable of forming a government nowadays. They have lost the power of making a firm stand; they never dare to do anything but give way." "Are you going to take up politics too, may I ask?" "It's high time we did," she said. "Only wait until we women have got rid of you men's teachings. Then you'll see."

Reality is a hard school for such a young girl; but this one has been brought up to it, and she is in her element. And as she sits here now, she has forgotten her writing only for a moment, while she looks out of the window. Her thoughts are with her parents. What an utterly different world they must live in! A good thing, indeed, that she has not to live with them and play daughter of the house. But that is no reason why she should not sit here and think of them. She sees a woman with oval face and white hair—what a fate is hers! She would be glad, perhaps, to come here; but for her husband's sake she would rather go on bearing her cross—how strange! She sits on still thinking of it. Surely there is something behind this, something that she herself has as yet no key to. A husband? Throw yourself away for a husband!

And she thinks of her brother. He did not come to see her when he went south after the holidays, and since then she has not heard a word from him. What is he about now? She has almost a mind to go down to the city and look him up, but would not that be to stoop too far? Yet, can she do without him? She sits on staring at the window, and at last drops her head upon her hand.

There are steps in the passage, someone knocks. "Come in." It is the old overseer, Ola Langmo. He stumps in, broad and heavy, in his blue overalls. The heavy beard is almost white, and when he takes his hat off one sees that he is quite bald except about

the ears. He clears his throat as he looks at Louise with a fatherly eye. He has been on the manor these fifty years, and he was always privileged to speak his mind, even in the old lady's time, when anything important was afoot.

"Is there anything fresh, Ola?" She leans back and points with her eyes to a chair.

"It is only about the felling," he says.

"Yes, what about it?"

"If we are to limit it the way the forester wants, it's a bad look-out for the work-people."

Now, of course, Ola, as farm overseer, has nothing whatever to do with the management of the forest; but he would not be the man he is, if he did not have his finger in every pie.

"Yes, we will have to turn off a number of men," she says, looking down at her hands.

"There'll be clemming in many a home this winter then," says the old fellow, fingering his hat.

"Everything is going downhill," she says, as if speaking to her hands. "Timber is down to half, and we might as well shut up the sawmill. No one is building, and there is no sale for materials. The price of milk is falling, and meat and bacon fetch almost nothing. You must see that we have to reduce expenses."

To this man she speaks in quite a different tone from the one she uses when sitting in council of state. As a child she has swung between his knees, she can trust him.

"The thing is," he says, "that when things are bad for one and all, then the one that has the strongest back should bear the most."

"Do you think if I throw away my money, anyone will be the richer in the end?"

"Hm. No. But when times were as they are now, the widow at Bruseth was like a mother for everyone to turn to." And the old man begins to brighten at old memories.

Louise is drawing with a pencil on a piece of paper. She knows that the old fellow has his point of honor. He wants to be a father to everyone. The work-people always come to him when they are in trouble. She cannot send him away as she would the forest inspector or Herr Prahl, the lawyer.

"Besides, they are willing to take half wages," he says, playing out his trump card.

"Did they tell you so?"

"I told them so."

And now she can't help smiling again. But perhaps he is right. It is enough for him to have told them.

So she promises to do all she can, and claps her white hand into his broad fist. And Ola Langmo goes out like a man who feels he has done some good in this world.

And again the young woman sits alone gazing out of the window. She asks much of her people; it is only fair that on her side she should care for them. But

this is no small matter that she has to manage now all alone.

There are three cellulose factories in the district, and they need a quantity of timber; but the widow at Bruseth was at loggerheads with them, and at last she refused to sell them a single shaving. The struggle cost both parties dear, for the widow bought up forests all round till she had regularly hemmed them in—but war is war. Is there any reason for going on with this war? Is she brave enough to go back upon the wishes of the dead?

And down in the little town there are plans for communal tenement-buildings, and it's not likely that anyone can supply materials more cheaply than she. If a bargain were struck, the sawmill could be kept going through the winter. The chairman? Yes, he is a Communist. What would Mother Bruseth have said? This matter, too, she has to think over for a while. But at last she rises, with a deep sigh. She is responsible for her people. And the dead must not rule the living.

As well settle it at once—she takes the telephone and rings up the chairman.

A little later she goes slowly out. It is autumn, there is a smell of straw and potato stalks in the air, and the hollow noise of heavy loads of barley being driven up the barn-bridge. She and the housekeeper are alone in the great rooms; but on a big manor like this time never hangs heavily, there are too many things constantly demanding to be seen to.

She goes down the steps, round the corner of the house, and turns into the garden; and here the wind takes hold of her hair and blows the dark locks round her ruddy face. Here she stands for a moment only, looking out over the world in its autumn coloring. The sky is full of dark, drifting clouds, and beneath them the gray lake, yellow hill-ridges, farms with greensward, and fields with their corn stacks on poles. And down below lies the town with its little houses. "Lorentz," she says, half-aloud, as she thinks how every morning they had driven down there to school. It seems for a moment as if she were standing here gazing after him. Then she must go in to her desk again. And evening comes, and she goes her rounds with the bailiff through stall and byre, and only when that is done does she feel herself free. Next comes supper with Fröken Norberg, the distance between them as great as ever. At last she is alone in her rooms; she has filled them with books, and here she has her grand piano. As she sits reading she will now and again lift her head and listen to a hymn tune, sung somewhere in the big empty house.

And to-morrow she must be up early again. No one shall say that things go worse now she is in charge.

In Fru Alme's will a large sum had been set aside for a new hospital. Louise had formed a committee to further the business, and before she knew it, she found herself chairman.

There were parties during the autumn and winter,

both in the town and on the big manors round about, and of course she went out a great deal. People's eyes always turned to her when she came in. This young woman, who managed her business like a man and took such firm hold of everything, was none the less a lady; she dressed with taste, behaved as if she had no idea anyone noticed her, and, if she came near enough, one could catch a delicate perfume that hung about her.

As was natural, she was much sought after at dances; but sometimes young men were a little afraid of approaching her, and she noticed this and was amused at it. It did, in fact, seem a little absurd that she, who at home ruled over so many men, must sit and wait till one or other bashful youth was good enough to come and ask her for a dance.

If people had only been a little less anxious to see her married. And if the eyes round about the walls had been a little less watchful when she danced. She could not help it—the warmer a young man's glances became, the colder she grew, and this perhaps led her to say things that sounded worse than she meant them to be. But indeed she had some experience of men in other circles, and knew that it could hardly be for her fine eyes alone that the heiress of Bruseth was so sought after. Suppose the day should come when she herself took fire—would she have pluck enough to show it? What about the widow at Bruseth—had she, too, not been married once!

She had bought herself a new motor-car—the snow had not come yet—and on moonlight nights she flew along the roads, looking down on black woods and lighted farm-houses in the parishes on both sides of the lake. These were the times when she felt herself really free, free. She would stop near a manor and sit a while, watching the lighted windows. No doubt the family were gathered about the supper table now, in a homely comfort such as she herself perhaps might never know. At home no one waited for her; but then on the other hand she was free. And there was a rare delight in setting the motor going again and rushing once more through the dark country-side. Free, free!

II

Even in a small community like that of the little town by the lakeside there comes to be an upper class, and often it is not easy to understand why one person belongs to it and why it is impossible for another to slip in. It is certainly not the old "official aristocracy." A teacher at the grammar school will perhaps be held at arm's length, but not the town's principal watchmaker, who has traveled, and has a pretty villa with good wine in its cellars and modern paintings on its walls. The time is past when people of low degree bowed down in awe before those with a college education. At a party the doctor may have to put up with the tanner's, who has learned his trade in England, taking the lead, if the talk turns upon Shakspere. At the same time the new society is just as rigidly exclusive as when "the cultured" were a clique by themselves, and if a newcomer is to slip in, he must have qualities that appeal to women in particular. He need not necessarily have good looks, but he must dress unimpeachably. He must be able to talk about books and art, but on no account must he hold forth on abstruse subjects. If he dances well, it is all to the good; if he plays the violin or piano, it is still better; if he can distinguish himself in theatricals at bazaars, he will soon be indispensable.

And he will come one day to be a master of the jargon the circle affects, and when he meets his fellows in the street he need only lift a finger toward his hat and say, Hullo!

Young Captain Rud was not of the inner circle, but this was not because he lived in a small, insignificant house, with his parents, who were in a small way of life. His father was a cutler and brass-founder, who made fine sheath-knives with horn handles and silver ferrules, and bells so well tempered that people said you could play hymn tunes on them. The son had been a shining light when he was at the town high school; he was known to have done well in his examinations both for the military school and the Staff College; but he could not rest content with the career of lieutenant in an army that never saw any service. He had come back home and become gymnastic-master at the high school, but this did not fill up his time; he helped his father in his workshop, but that could not occupy his mind. He gave lectures and wrote articles on national questions: a healthier diet for the country folk, home-colonization instead of emigration, the stimulation of house industries—but even so, time hung on his hands. So he took to traveling, and, if he had not enough money to pay for his ticket on a ship, he worked his passage. He went to South Africa and worked in the diamond mines, and served awhile in a Colonial Corps; he went to China and took part in the civil war; he wandered about America trying to form some conception of

the mighty technical and economic developments in that vast country. Then homesickness drove him back again; he felt that as a patriot he ought to make himself useful. But people have not time to listen to a man who has so much to tell and who takes everything so seriously. One can glance in a moment through a long article in a paper about the colonial policy of the great powers, taking in half of it, and then turn the page and read with more interest about fires, bootlegging, or murders. But to listen for more than five minutes to a man who talks competently about the money matadors of Wall Street, is more than anyone can abide—what is to become of a man's work, his games, his cinema? When Captain Rud's well-knit, elastic figure was seen up the street, a good many men would slip round the nearest corner—not being in the vein for world-politics to-day. The young officer began to understand, and he came to have a peculiar way of taking off his hat, and a peculiar smile when he greeted people. He gave up going to the men's club, for he was always left alone at his table, and he had no mind to join the others and lay himself out to talk country-town gossip. He was never asked out to parties nor to balls; he was never called upon for any official functions. And people began to look at him askance, because he greeted them so ceremoniously, and with such a peculiar smile.

"Come up and have a ride now and then," said Louise when she met him in the street one day. "My

brother has a gray blood-mare here, and she gets no exercise." "Very many thanks, but don't you ride yourself, Fröken Alme?" "I have a chestnut, and one is all I can manage." "Does that mean that I may have the pleasure of riding with you?" He drew himself up, and his brown eyes began to brighten. "Yes, I suppose I shall have to go with you to see how you treat the mare." "It is very kind of you, but I'm afraid I shall not have time." "Time? You must never make that excuse when a lady asks you." "But supposing it is true?" Oh—what are you so busy about then?" "I am trying to put some go into the Peasant Party in the upland parishes."

Louise burst out laughing. "Well," he said, and the light in his face seemed to fade, "is that so very comic?" "Yes, to be sure it is comic—or are you thinking of buying a farm?" "No, but a man may surely interest himself in a thing even if he has no personal stake in it." "That's something new." "New, is it?" "Yes, but interesting too," said the young woman seriously.

But some time after, he actually rang up and asked if it would be convenient for him to come to-day. "Quite convenient, Captain Rud." It is a curious sensation—to hear a young woman's voice through the telephone, when it is as attractive as hers.

Winter was over; most of the roads were clear of snow; spring was nearly come. As she sat on her chestnut stallion and watched the Captain swing himself

up on to the gray filly, she felt a twinge at her heart. Last time it had been her brother, and since then no one had been allowed on the mare's back. To give Lady exercise, she had made a stable boy lunge her round for an hour at the end of a long line. And why should she trust her to the Captain to-day? The spirited beast tried to throw him off; it had forgotten what the world looked like outside the farm fences, and when they got on the road it shied at every post. "Take off your spurs!" she cried, as she thought she saw them touch the mare. "I shall do no such thing." "Well, she'll run away with you." "We'll see about that. I've been on a horse once or twice before." She thought he was needlessly hard-handed with the mare —she would certainly see that this was the last time. But all the same he had a good seat; he was a real horseman.

"Are we going to the town?" he asked in surprise, as she turned down in that direction. "Yes—I suppose you don't mind people seeing us together?" He glanced at her sidelong, and laughed. No doubt she thought it would be a good joke to fill the windows full of curious faces and set going a choice piece of gossip. "We might look in on your father and mother," she said, and this time her glance was very friendly.

How out of place this man was in the conditions his life imposed! His love of action and adventure had driven him abroad, but the ties that bound him to his own country and his own native place had drawn him

back again. He is probably nearing the forties; in the army of a great power he would have been a colonel by now; but here, in an army that exists only on paper, he will doubtless end as captain. And as to all these lectures and articles on questions of public importance, they're likely for the most part to lead to nothing practical. His laugh is perhaps rather too boyish, he is somewhat wanting in personal dignity—that, too, is no doubt owing to the atmosphere about him being what it is. At the same time, his feeling for his old parents prevents him from seeking a more congenial life—is that another fault? What if a woman took him up . . . or he found a spring-board to take off from—such a thing as a fortune, for example? Might there not be the makings of a notable man in him?

She is conscious, as she rides along, of thoughts like these running in her head quite of their own accord. But to him she says: "You use the bit too much, Captain. You can see that it irritates her. She wants a lighter hand—please! My brother always rode her on the snaffle."

"Your brother again!"

"Well, have you any objection to my mentioning him?"

"I believe this is the fifth or sixth time in this ride alone. But you mustn't expect me to compare with him." He laughed with a touch of irony.

On the outskirts of the town they passed the little house that was his home; the gray-bearded smith

came out of his workshop with spectacles far down his nose and a file in his hand; the mother opened the parlor window, looked out, amazed at seeing the two together. Louise waved to them and said a few words as they rode past, and when next she looked at the captain she noticed that his face was flushed—with emotion of some kind.

Late that night she was lying in bed, gazing into the dark.

Yes, she will soon be five and twenty. Has she ever loved? Not in earnest. Is she in love now? No. Is there anyone she likes better? Certainly not.

She cannot forget how his look touched her when they rode past his parents' house. She can understand that a woman might forget her caution and throw herself at the head of a man like this.

But another question comes up. Suppose . . . suppose she should some day . . . would she be willing to give up the reins to a husband?

And one thing more: can she venture to give way to what people call love? If she should lose her heart to such a man—does it follow that he will be the right master to bring to Bruseth?

Never in this world will she risk putting another Squire Alme at the helm here.

But she is a young woman. The house is so empty.

She turns over in bed, and passes her hands over her face. Oh, Lorentz, where are you? Why will you have nothing more to do with me?

In autumn, when the harvest was in, she gave a great ball for the youth of the neighborhood. From the town and the big manors round about came chaises and dog-carts and Ford motor-cars. The rooms swarmed with ladies in bright colors and slim gentlemen in full dress. For once in a way there was a party to which Captain Rud was invited. But the thing that made all open their eyes in earnest came when the young hostess, clapping her hands, announced that, in accordance with the custom of the house, she was going to name a host for the evening, and this time the host was to be Captain Rud.

Not even for Christmas did her brother come home, and, in reply to a long letter from her, he answered briefly that he meant to spend Christmas with their parents this year.

Very well!

When she had duly kept Christmas for her household at the manor, she went off on a trip to Paris.

III

EIGHTEEN months had passed, and Merle was sitting one day in the little cottage reading a letter from Lorentz; and she had read only a few lines when she broke out: "Well, I never . . ."

"What is it?" said Peer, who was waiting impatiently to hear what the boy had said.

"You won't believe it."

"Is . . . is he engaged?"

"He . . . he's studying theology."

"Nonsense. But go on—read it!"

DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER:

I have put off telling you the truth; but the fact is that our meeting a couple of years ago had a quite unexpected effect on me. I must tell you that the presentment of the world that I had accepted until then, ceased from that time to satisfy me. If I am now a student of theology, it is certainly not because I am a worn-out young man seeking rest, or a converted sinner creeping to the Cross, but because I could no longer evade the everlasting question: what in essence is the power that gathers men together in temples and endows them with a strength unknown and alien to us others? I was once a Communist, but my faith broke down. If the great feeling of community is extended to embrace all who have been, all who are, and all who are to come, then we have already entered upon eternity, or to use a simile, a bell is already calling to us out of infinite space.

Most of my generation are groping uneasily about for a foothold, and if so many throw themselves into revolutionary politics, these are only substitutes for something better—they are dreaming of something that lies beyond. But it is here that the difficulty begins. A young man can find no sense in any interpretation of life save that which opens for him the widest room for healthy self-development. He sees one road leading to Golgotha, a second to Olympus, a third to the laboratory; but none of these leads him to the holy of holies that he sees in dreams. And, as to the Temple, the church, he soon discovers that most of those who call themselves Christians, ask for nothing more from religion than license to sin in peace, secure in the shelter of Christ and the mercy of God.

I felt that I must study Christianity, must see whether it held anything for me, and whether it could be so transformed and renewed as to give expression to the longing for the eternal among us, the youth of to-day.

For the present I do not know what I believe. I might be described as a tourist in the religious landscape. I attend the lectures that have to be attended, and study the subjects that have to be studied. I think to myself: this is what man believed, and there are a few who believe it even now. But for myself, I stand apart and think on my own account. So far, unfortunately, I have been unable to find in the Bible anything but a religious museum; but, as everyone knows, there are a few splendid things to be found in such museums, even though most are worthless for us to-day. What then is theology? An attempt, by means of systems and interpretations, to find a meaning for it all. Thus at one moment one is in a torture chamber, and that is theology; then one is playing in a nursery, and that is theology; and again one mounts to the heights to which souls have raised themselves in ecstasy and found union with God Himself, and that, too, is theology.

The worse of it is that so far I have found it impossible to

gain much understanding of the carpenter's son himself. That He is one thing from the historical point of view, and something quite different from the theological, makes it none the easier. But even if one looks at Him as teacher only, His personality and doctrine are often self-contradictory and irreconcilable. His miracles impress us no longer, and His Sermon on the Mount is a collection of paradoxes which no man ought to or can live up to. How far the gospels are to be relied upon is a constant bone of contention among the learned. But two things it seems clear this carpenter's son knew nothing of—humor and love of work. For all that, we are to "believe" on Him, and to strive to be like Him. Then comes the theologian Paul and tacks on to Him the ancient Christ-myth, which Jesus probably never knew, and to that he adds the doctrine of atonement, which degrades the God who demands such a propitiation. Yet here, then, we stand to-day at the summit of Christian religious culture—rejoicing that an innocent man should have been crucified so that we sinners could go free.

You a theologian! you are no doubt saying. Yes, I have written down here the things that at present are stumbling-blocks to me; but I cannot turn, I must go on. I feel that in every human soul there are sacred streams that flow into the ocean of eternity. Probably most of us have moments when we hear the mighty cosmic symphony, when we feel and are partakers in the inspiration of the universe itself, when it is one with us, and we with it. Then we look around for some means of interpreting it all, and we find the doctrines of the church: sin, mercy, faith in the carpenter's son. It is like playing Wagner on the cithern! No! say most people, and turn away. A few keep their religion in a small corner of their consciousness, and turn to it for a couple of hours on a Sunday morning, when they can dream at their ease dreams that conflict with the inexorable laws of everyday life. Is this to go on? It cannot go on—a change must come.

I read not long ago of an Indian reincarnation of Christ, known as the Sadhu, who preaches that to live for Jesus means to die for him daily. Magnificent! But what about life? Work, love, art, research—are these nothing worth, compared with dying?

How easy it must be to wander about as a son of God with beggar's wallet and sandals. You let others have the sinful burden of providing for you, and yourself go resistlessly to heaven. Were I Our Lord, I would set more store by an honest farmer or banker; they at all events accept the full responsibilities of life.

If the Christian should some day build up a Temple and a religious cult worthy of the high ethical standpoint that the greatest of our lay minds have discovered and that some other religions have in part attained, there will be less room in it for a vengeful God and His crucified son, and more for Plato, Spinoza, and Shakspere. In such a church I would gladly be a priest.

One thing is certain—if ever I mount a pulpit, it will not be to lament over sinners and to threaten doom and punishment, nor to whine for mercy. It will be to give mankind new courage to act, to inspire it with pride and joy in what it is, to sing hymns to the glory and the marvel of life. Men should come to the Temple, not to beseech, but to give. Faith is a redundancy. I have come to be religious, because I heard in my heart the call of a springtide that sought an outlet in the divine. And hence it seems to me that we young people have before us the task, more glorious than ever any was, of uplifting again the divine in the soul of man. It will not be done by satire or polemics, but by the light that it is in our power to kindle throughout the world. My theological studies are a tunnel I must pass through; I must learn how other men in their craving for the truth in this matter have groped, thought, and dreamed; and thereafter I must try what I can do myself.

And doubtless there will be much that I must pass through first. Already I have the feeling of standing knocking at the door of the great mystery. I am striving to penetrate into a reality that is still a riddle; I am turning my face toward a brightness that I have not yet the power to see. Most likely, then, my real studies will not be what others teach me, but what I must search out for myself.

I felt that I must write and confide all this to you two, who are my parents. I hope that you, Mother, will not be too distressed, and that Father at least will understand me.

"Yes!" Peer burst out, rising from his seat.

Merle looked up from the letter questioningly. He came and laid his hands on her shoulders and shook her a little. "This is no small matter, Merle. Now you'll see! Now you'll see!"

IV

Was this not the very thing Peer had dreamed of for years past? Was his son to fulfil his dreams? His own life had been thrown away; but religious longing flamed up in him endlessly, he had visions and dreams; and now had come the boy, perhaps to realize them. It would be a resurrection indeed for him, an awakening to a new life.

And in the days that followed there was a strange restlessness upon him. His step was quick, he shut the doors with a thud; when Merle called him to meals he would forget to come, or he would stop on the way and stand staring on the ground. "Merle!" he said one day, "it is clear that the boy is groping and perplexed —don't you think that we might help him?" "It would have to be you, then," she said, "you have thought so much about those things."

But privately Merle had her own old-fashioned religion. She lay at night with folded hands before she slept, and nowadays it was to give thanks for the joy of having found her children again. Peer did not know this; he was full of his own thoughts—the boy must have an answer. It seemed as if his son were setting out to new-fashion the greatest of all things, and in this his father must stand by him. In what way could he help? What was it he had to give?

"The New Temple"—so he had called it to the boy; but what in reality did he mean by the words? Was it to be a new building unlike any existing church? To be sure, he had often seen it in many-colored visions; but it was a different matter now that it was to be raised up upon the earth. And what was it to contain? Was he clear about that? Or had it been merely an inward sense of something great and beautiful, more a music of the soul than clear thought and definite picture? The boy must have an answer, and what help could he bring him?

Every now and then he came to Merle and said, "You must write to Lorentz to-day, I have a great deal now I want to say to him." Well and good; Merle would bring out her writing things. But when he tried to begin dictating, walking up and down the room, he found it very difficult. This was not a matter of ordinary words and turns of speech, of airy, vague encouragements. No—what was now the real help he had to give? And so it would end with his standing there shaking his head, and saying he must put it off till to-morrow. He must think things out more thoroughly.

One evening, when they had gone to bed, he began thinking aloud. "I am a bad father. We could not bring up children; and we have nothing to leave them, not even what is called a life philosophy. There is the boy in need of our help, and what have we to give

him? When it comes to the point, nothing at all."

A moment later her hand sought his and found it. "Have we nothing, Peer?"

He answered after a while:

"Even if we had, it is so hard to pass it on to others. It may be that what is of most value in one is doomed to die and disappear along with oneself."

They lay on, holding each other's hands and gazing into the darkness. Then he began again. "I wonder whether religion is anything else than the sum of what we have saved up from our lives. One man remembers only the adversity he has met, and, in his religion, remains a poor beggar all his days. Another treasures up within him all the good and beauty that has fallen to his lot, and feels himself wealthy, even when the outer world has stripped him to the skin."

Her hand pressed his. He went on: "In any help I may try to give the boy, I would fain have you with me."

"That is kind of you, dear. But I'm afraid I haven't much to give."

It was his hand that pressed hers now.

"I have been trying lately to count up the things that you and I have laid by, and that make up our riches. Memories of the time when the children were small and we two were young. Oh yes, both Christmas and Easter abide in such memories. And then the day in the mountains when I met you for the first time,

and all night lay drifting in a boat on the lake. Truly there are hours that make holy all the days that follow."

At that she stroked his forehead.

"Maybe such memories are like fuel heaped up for a bonfire. And one fine day the fire is lit and blazes up into a joyful faith in the divine, which shines upon and warms others too. Merle, what if that were so?"

She sighed and laid a hand over her eyes. It was not easy to follow him.

"We must write to-morrow, my wife. But it is so difficult. Suppose he does not care for what we have to give?"

"We shall be together, even though we stand outside."

"Ah, but we can't rest content with that. We must do our utmost to help."

True, Merle has her own religion; but at this moment she is holding him by the hand, and she cannot but try to help him. What is it that they two have saved up? They look back over the same road. They call to mind the same chances, good and evil. Together they have lived through fearful days and nights, but they have come out conquerors, because they have ever had some overplus of mystic power within them. They lie here reminding one another of this and that happening, of this time and that. The evil and good that have befallen them are now become treasures that they gather together to give to Lorentz. He must be

taught how glorious is striving, how divine suffering, and how all-conquering mutual love.

Then he says again that to-morrow they must write without fail.

But to-morrow was to-day over again. As he paced the floor, dictating, he was brought to a stand when he came to the kernel of the matter. "It will have to wait till to-morrow," he said, looking at her with despairing eyes.

"Very well," she answered, strangely relieved.

It was as though both of them felt a bashful reluctance to give utterance to these things. Their religion and their love were one and indivisible, and were not a thing to be talked of to others.

Again a night comes when they lie holding each other by the hand and whispering. They realize that it is possible that what is wealth for them may be valueless for their son. The sufferings they have undergone will never be compensated for. They bore within them no germ of good for others. These sufferings, as well as their joy, their happiness, their love, had their own life, and must die and be lost in the everlasting mystery, as they must themselves.

They realize this as they hold each other's hands. Their son must begin from the beginning, and fight his way forward to clearness as they have done. And will he too one day disappear like them and go down to darkness, while others begin again from the beginning? Is this all?

The New Temple—it is not for Peer to have a hand in its building.

None the less, in the days that followed there was a new briskness about them both. She hummed and sang at her work, he went about whistling in a placid humor. It seemed as if the thought of this son who was to become a priest and perhaps some day bring in a happier age, had given their faculties new and livelier play.

"We must write to him all the same, wife," he said one day, "we can at least wish him good luck and ask him to tell us how he gets on."

And a little later he looked out of the window and sighed. "Strange! But so it is—it is not for us to take part."

V

A COUPLE of stations beyond the city's eastern suburb there is a boarding establishment up among the pine woods. It consists of four brown, wooden villas with paths between them, and there is a dining-hall in the midst. In the morning it sends forth a stream of human beings, which flows down to the station in time for the business and school train; and, later on, the afternoon trains empty the same stream out again, and the men and women, most of them with portfolios under their arms, climb the hill again. One fine autumn day Lorentz Alme was among them; and he took two rooms, a sitting-room and bedroom, in the villa farthest up the hill.

"Is the lady below me a musician?" he asked the hostess, who had come up with him. "No; Herr Kram, the bank cashier, is on the first floor; his wife plays a good deal, but if you . . ." "Oh no, not at all. By the way, is the lady good-looking?" The hostess eyed this fair young man in his brown tweed suit. His face seemed mature and sensible enough, and yet he was asking about a strange lady's looks. "Why, you must judge for yourself," she said. "Ah, then she is plain," he nodded as he walked up to the corner window of the sitting-room and then to the balcony door, in which there was another window. "The view here is

not bad. I shall be able to get a lot of work done here. But it is a pity that you have not a single pretty woman in the place."

This young man joked with the most serious face. "You must see to that," she laughed, and then she left him.

He stood on the balcony, looking down at the fiord and its islands, with their white villas half-hidden among firs and yellow leaf-tree tops. Farther away are the rounded ridges of the Askerland hills against the bright autumn sky. The air is clear, but damp, smelling of mold and withered leaves.

"But at Bruseth there is a smell of straw and corn and potato-shaws now," he thinks. "It is beautiful here certainly, but can it keep a man from missing—the other?"

Down in the dining-hall there is a buzz of talk from three long tables. He sees at once that all there are strangers to him; and he throws himself into the chair to which he is shown. He is glad that he knows no one: to be left to himself is just what he wants.

Later in the evening he stands on his balcony again in the dark. And now the houses on the islands down below have turned into a multitude of yellow stars, settled down upon the earth. And the ships glide out and in on the glassy fiord like fiery serpents dragging a wake behind them. Farther in, the harbor is lit up with a blaze of many-colored lights playing upon the water, and beyond is the town itself, a billowy

landscape of light, rising toward where Voksenkollen's dark ridges stand against the starry heavens. A mingled hum drones through the night from motor-cars, motor-boats, and trains; and a heavy rumble comes from the traffic of the harbor and town.

An hour later his boxes have been brought up and he begins to unpack. He must try and make some kind of a home here in this strange place, and he has his own pictures with him to hang on the walls. The bookcase is too small to hold all his books, so the overflow has to be piled on the floor, and the wardrobe in his bedroom is filled with his many suits. He still goes on living like a rich man, while most of his fellow students go about with their boots down at heel, lodge in garrets, and dine at the cheapest cafés. Is it right for him to go on living in this style, spending his inheritance? It is a question he constantly asks and then puts aside. But he could not stand the life in town any longer. The last straw was that, as a divinity student, he was not at liberty to go to dances or rendezvous, to go in for sport, to go to theaters or concerts, or to the best restaurants when he felt like it. This was too much! Surely the ferment of life that was so strong in him had a right to an outlet—was it not the very thing he would set highest when the day came for him to mount the pulpit? And then he was homesick for Bruseth! It was the town he could not stand. He hungered for the view of the country-side, seen from his old home. It was there only that forests, lakes, and

hills lay and sang in the autumn evenings. It was the voice of that song that had sent him where he now was. To master himself fully he must go back there again—but Louise bars the road. Why? That is another question. There are so many questions that keep cropping up, and that he may be able to solve more easily now that he is going to live all alone.

He goes about unpacking; he hums and whistles, but thoughts are simmering in his head all the time. See here, surely it is waste of time to study for the priesthood without knowing what one believes oneself. How can you go on feeling the old love of Communism and at the same time bear a grudge to your sister because she inherited the millions and not you? Didn't you forgive her long ago? You thought you had, but did it last? Is she to blame? No. Has she ever done you any wrong? No. And yet you bear her a grudge? Yes, worse luck. Can't you stop it? No.

He hates the conception of sin. But he sits down on a chair and thinks over this business with Louise. Is it not extraordinary? He could behave perfectly toward her as long as they were together—that time. But it was by a strong effort of self-control. When they had parted and he was away from her, he stopped making this effort, and very soon he began to feel a vague dislike of the thought of seeing Louise again, and it grew and grew as time went on. Whenever things went against him, a little devil within him said that it was Louise's fault. Things would have been very

different if . . . and he gives up trying to think and lets instinct have its way. "What is instinct? Dark impulses rising from depths which thought cannot reach. But this instinct has been working on its own account, brewing a venom of its own, till one day your eyes are opened and you realize that you hate Louise. It is her fault, you feel, that you cannot see Bruseth again. She has driven you away. Nonsense? To say that doesn't mend matters." And now he mutters aloud: "Sin? What is sin?"

He still sits there, looking about him in a rather helpless way. There are moments when he is thoroughly at odds with himself. But he has condemned himself to solitude now, that he may gain control again. Will he succeed? He must succeed.

In the course of his unpacking he comes across an album of Renaissance pictures given him by his sister, and he sits down and begins to turn over the leaves. Here is Michael Angelo's "God the Father," the creator who rushes in his might through the universe, so that hair, beard, and cloak stream behind him in space, while he strews out suns and stars. This is a picture of the Deity that he can understand. But is it sufficient? No, not for him. Yet he has no picture of his own ready; that is another question he has doomed himself to this solitude to clear up. Will he succeed? He must succeed. He turns more pages; passes the many crucifixions, which he abominates, and the many Madonnas with the child and with eyes lifted to heaven.

Everyone to his taste. He gazes for a moment at all these pictures of that divinity which poor mankind has tried to bring to life. But here is a Pietà, the young woman with her grown-up son dead upon her lap. That is another matter. He sits gazing at that. There is suffering here too, but suffering that has taken on beauty and majesty.

Suddenly he goes to the writing-table and looks at the portrait of his mother. It had been taken in the parents' happy days, when she was young and beautiful. "Why, she is like the Pietà!" he says, half-aloud, and his grave face begins to brighten. He sits a while gazing at it.

While he is putting away his linen in the chest of drawers in his bedroom, a strange feeling comes over him. In the old days it was always Louise who looked to such things; and more than once she had scolded him for not keeping his drawers in order. That was past now. She ironed his shirts and sewed on his buttons. She had always taken his part. "Is it not your own fault that things are as they are between you two? Yes. Can you not write to her and put things right, or go up there in the holidays?" He shakes his head and sighs. "What is sin? Forces work as they list in the shadowlands of our soul. Curb them? Can you? That is what we have to try."

He looks helplessly about him again. "But you must go through with it, Lorentz."

It is still too early to go to bed; he lights a pipe and begins to pace the floor. After all, nothing counts besides the mighty task he sees before him. He is no Luther to be sure; oh no! But at any rate he is a rebel. As he sits at lectures, he feels like a spy; he is ever on the look-out for points of attack. The other students on the benches are younger, most are from the country, and they seem to look upon theology as a lesson they are obliged to con by rote; they talk to each other about livings in the North, in the West, or the South, and discuss the dialect they will have to preach in. Not for a moment do they imagine that he, where he sits beside them, knows that the Christian church is on the point of collapse, and that he himself means to give it the final push.

Sometimes, meanwhile, he goes to church on Sundays, and there he sits watching the pastor with a certain bloodthirsty stealth. One is much like another. They stand there whimpering about sin, turning up their eyes to heaven at the thought of mercy—the same expressions over and over again—the same old phrases reeled off the same gramophone record.

Will no one dare to put in a new record? Is man nothing but a sinner? Has he no other mission but to prepare himself for heaven? Are we at every step on earth to think of nothing but of ingratiating ourselves with a peevish Jahveh-God, who sits spying upon mankind, noting every idle word they utter? You shall ac-

count for it on the day of judgment, says the prophet of Nazareth; and the pastors, in all seriousness, base Sunday sermons on the saying.

Lorentz has conceived an increasing ill-will to this central figure of Christianity, whom they call by so many names. He feels as though he were walking round this figure, growing more and more indignant. Some day he will prove that it is an idol which degrades mankind; he has made up his mind to hurl it into the dust. What a sorry thing this lay-preacher of genius has made of the life of men. He has made them continually groan in self-accusation; pretend that their burden of sin is so great as to deserve everlasting hell; all this they have to feign, that they may be ripe for mercy and salvation by the blood of the cross. And this goes on in our day! When *he* mounts the pulpit he will speak out plainly. The Greeks made the world beautiful; flowers, wine, the graces, poetry, art, love, and husbandry, each had its goddess or its god. Daily life and natural life-growth were lifted up and made holy. How much richer life must have been in their days, how much higher and wider the heavens, how much more beautiful the earth to wander over. And yet, these religions are dead for all time. What have you set up in their stead?

He has tried to prepare a new book of texts upon which some day he will preach. They are not merely quotations from Plato, Seneca, Confucius, and Indian and Persian sages; no, they are grains of gold collected

from modern everyday life, from laborers and artisans with whom he has traveled in trains or sat in taverns. But is that enough? No.

He paces up and down; the curtains are drawn. He fills a new pipe; he is alone.

Outside, people are coming up from the last train. They see there is still a light in the new lodger's room on the second floor of the upper villa. His shadow passes across the drawn blinds. Doubtless he is a student, they think, and is still reading, and thinking of his next examination.

How many a time during these last two years has he not wandered up and down like this. He feels within him an urgent longing which strives to find its outlet in a conception of eternity; but the forms that others offer will not do for him. Can he then find one for himself? A bird may fly sky-ward, thinking that in the end it must reach heaven; but at last it has just to turn about again and find a branch on earth where it can rest. Lorentz calls for help from many quarters. There is the organ music sent forth by the autumn landscape at Bruseth. Wave upon wave—lights scattered over the country-side; stars in the dome of heaven; himself in a dream encompassing it all. Was he thinking of salvation then? No. Was he thinking of himself at all? No. It was an ecstasy, rich beyond measure, full of thankfulness and joy in life, a merging of his being in the universe itself and in all the ages. Was that enough? No.

He calls up the memory of his walking tour among the mountains after his first visit to his parents, when a bell began to ring out his mother's and his father's name through the silent night. But was that enough? No.

And the summer night after that drive in the hills with those young people, when he lay on the hillside and the dawn began to glow. The powers of light swarmed about him, he saw a youthful God move over the heavens, and body and soul felt a hymn of praise rise from a full heart, a hymn to the morning, to youth, to beautiful life—aye, and to the mystery at the back of it all. Was that enough? No.

Over there lie his lecture notes, which he has unpacked. He is studying hard, he is training himself to be a revolutionary. Is that enough? What has he to set up instead, when the old church is overthrown?

Again he comes to a standstill and looks around as for help. It is a joy to write to his parents and confide all to them, a joy to get letters from them—always in his mother's hand. He understands that a kind of diffidence keeps them from offering advice. And that is well; he would not willingly receive it. And yet he seems to see between the lines now and then a trace of his father's hand, half stretched out, but withdrawn again. At Christmas he had heard him say: "You must either fight against Christ or fashion him anew." Oh yes, he is hard at work fighting him, but as to fashion-

ing him anew—that is what he most wants to do, but can he?

Midnight has come. A belated inward-bound steamer is blowing its siren in the harbor. The boarding-house has gone to rest. He pulls his boots off, so that he may pace up and down here without disturbing those below him.

And now he calls upon all his fairest memories as far back as he can remember, and they swarm out and around him like bright spirits. Let us take part. We will help you with the New Temple. Take us with you! Take us with you! But is this enough?

And at last he has to go to bed.

But now something quite new begins. He dreads putting out the light. This has come over him lately. This shutting his eyes and giving himself up to night and sleep is like entering the forecourt of death. And now it is that his displeasure with himself grows bitter. A life quite other than his life by day surges up in him like a heavy ground-swell.

Even as a boy, he has seemed to himself at night to have a double being; and the best part of him, the true Lorentz, drew away and rose in the dark and walked about the room. This Lorentz did all that the one who lay in bed had, alas, left undone. He appeared every night before sleep came. He grew up with him. Now he is four and twenty years of age, and the other Lorentz is pacing the floor again. "See here,"

he says, "how are things between you and Louise? How did you behave to Mother Bruseth? And how to him, and him—and her and her?"

The Lorentz that lies here cannot get away from these thoughts. The rebel against the church has begun to revolt against himself. And the other, he that is pacing the floor, has his own form and face, but he has always behaved perfectly, both to Louise, Mother Bruseth, and all the rest. That time the will was read and the lawyer had driven off, he had been able to go in and wish Louise joy with all his heart. He did not hurt her afterward; and he does not go on, year in, year out, storing up poison in his heart against her. He did not play Mother Bruseth false, and he did not live in hopes of being her heir while preaching against her wealth. No, *he* had not been a Communist, while feeling sure all the time of becoming a millionaire.

Of course this figure is merely fantasy. But he sees him plainly. It must have come from long habit. He walks up and down the floor without lecturing one, and there is something in Lorentz that is grateful to him for it. It is only that the figure out there has done all that Lorentz ought to have done, and it is this that makes him so ashamed. He grows more and more possessed by the feeling that he will never be able to put right the evil he has done. And as he raises his eyelids, he feels it is some consolation that he—that other one—at least has done what is right. At last he closes

his eyes altogether, but he sees him then even more distinctly in his mind's eye.

Of course it is only a freak of fancy, perhaps a habit formed when he was a little boy.

VI

One gray winter day, just before Christmas, she alighted from the train and took the road up toward the boarding-house. Two years had gone by now since she had seen him, and she could not bear it any longer. None of the rare letters she had had from him had contained more than a few lines; but now she was going to make a last attempt; besides, she had another errand to him to-day.

She knocked and walked in with her usual self-confidence. She would not have it seem that there was anything amiss between them. None the less, she stopped just inside the door and forgot to say anything by way of greeting.

He got up from his writing-table with a start, laid his pipe down, and threw back his head. They smiled at one another, but doubtfully. He thought—or a part of him thought: Has she come to read you a lesson again? Or to laugh in your face at your having turned theologian? But he heard himself say: "Why, is that you, my dear girl? This is jolly."

The width of the floor was still between them. He did not come forward and take her hand.

"Do you wear spectacles?" she said, by way of saying something—looking toward the writing-table.

"Oh, there's nothing much the matter. But, I say,

that's a fine fur of yours. Did you get it in Paris?"

"You know that I've been there?"

"Yes, wasn't it last year? Mother wrote something about it." But this somehow did not sound right, and he came forward and helped her off with her wraps. He heard voices within him begging and urging him to take her in his arms and give her a hug. Then maybe both of them would start crying—but that would have been rather too easy a victory for her.

"You are changed," she said, as he stepped backward toward the writing-table.

"One does change. But you—you're the same wild rose as ever. Is there no one that wants you?"

"Yes, there is."

"What?" He tried to treat it as a joke—but perhaps she was speaking in earnest?

She had said it on impulse, to see whether it made any impression. Perhaps, after all, he would feel it if she were to attach herself to someone else.

"Have—have you come to tell me about it?" He tried to smile.

"No." And she looked at him again expectantly, wondering if he would not ask her who it was. He understood, but he wasn't going to ask—she could come out with it herself.

"It was to show you a drawing," she said. "It would only be right, I think, if we were to put up a stone on Mother Bruseth's grave." And she took a paper out of her handbag and handed it to him.

Presently they were sitting on the sofa with their heads together over the drawing. "I thought we should have it of polished granite," she said. "Have you any objection?"

"No, what objection could I have? This looks very well."

Now came a question which she dreaded. If she said she would pay for the stone herself, he might think she thought him too poor to join in with her. And if she asked him whether he would pay his share, he might answer that there was every reason why she should bear the cost alone.

"Yes," he said, rising; "it was good of you to think of this. I should like to contribute my mite, if you'll accept it."

"Accept it?" Her face grew bright. "You must know how glad I am that we two should do it together."

He lounged about the room in his blue suit and soft tie, a beardless, well-knit figure. He looked as if he still went in for athletics. Perhaps he still greased his rebellious mop of hair and lay with a bandage over it at night; but it would not lie flat even now. His face had grown older, the mouth harder, and the eyes had sunk deeper under the bushy eyebrows.

"And this is where you live now?" She looked about her.

"Yes; as you see, it is a little better than a garret anyhow. Thanks, by the way, for the table-cloth you sent last Christmas. You see it's on the table over

there. And to be sure the cushions on the sofa were from you, too—the Christmas before. I hope I wrote and thanked you?"

"Bless us, yes! You're the champion letter writer." She laughed. "But tell me now—it wasn't a joke, this about your having taken to glasses?"

"No, it's the result of the year when I had to grind at the dead languages. I wanted to get it over quickly, and so . . . however, they're all right again now." He passed his hand over his eyes. It came on him as a novelty, this sisterly concern, after living so long among strangers.

"And you used always to despise the dead languages so!"

"There are some things one has to worry through."

"So as to get to paradise?"

"Hush—you're talking to a theologian."

"Don't theologians believe in paradise any more?"

"Theologians believe in more important things."

"Hell?"

"Life."

"Hereafter?"

"Here."

Thrust and riposte—almost like old times. But she soon saw that this was not the way to get closer to him.

"And how are things going with you? Has the farming at Bruseth been going ahead?" It was his turn to be curious.

"Oh yes. But prices are going to the deuce."

"The price of horses keeps up."

"So you follow prices enough to know that?"

"I'll never be anything but a countryman."

"By the way, there's one person at Bruseth who is always asking for you. She misses you a great deal more than you think."

"She?"

"Yes, Lady. She can't understand why you never want to go for a ride now."

"There are plenty to take my place."

"Oh yes—I suppose there's nothing else for it."

Her eyes narrowed again to watch the effect of this. And she had the pleasure of seeing him start a little and open his eyes—but only for a moment. He took good care not to ask any question.

"Do you really like being here, Lo?"

"I miss the leaf-trees. Without them there is neither spring nor autumn."

And for a moment both saw the wide view from Bruseth, the lake, the settled lands, the groves of birch and aspen, most plainly of all, perhaps, the old maple avenue up to the manor, bursting into leaf in spring, golden in autumn, and, down the slopes below, the greensward and the yellow corn-fields. And then there was the big fruit-garden, smothered in blossom in the spring, with red apples and berries in the autumn. A pause fell between them, and they looked one at the other, united by their memories.

"Lorentz," she asked suddenly, "why did you do it?"

"Do it?" This time her voice sounded clearer, lower, more like what it had been when they were children, and his took on the same tone unconsciously.

"You know quite well what I mean." She looked at the note-books on the writing-table.

"What's the use of talking about that?" He smiled sadly.

"Tell me now, Lo—why did you do it?"

"Am I put to the question?"

"Yes."

"Then I hardly think we will get very far." He leaned back against the writing-table and looked out of the window.

As he stood there, evidently drawing back into his shell, she made a bold attack. "Perhaps you mean to be a politician-priest, and teach that to share with one another is the one thing needful?"

This was an unfortunate venture, but he helped her to pass it off—he felt he had enough bitterness stored up already.

"It would be a simple matter enough," he said, "if it could all be settled that way."

She had not meant it as unkindly as it sounded—now she tried another line. "Of course you know that there are a number of learned pundits who believe they can prove that he—the central person—never lived?"

"Neither, I take it, did Hamlet and Faust ever live. The only trouble is that they are immortal."

"You don't think it matters much whether he ever lived or not?"

He shook his head and smiled.

"Do you think the same about God?"

"What is God?"

This time she jumped in her chair and gazed at him.

"You, a theologian, ask that?"

"It's for that I am a theologian."

How nimbly he could hide away behind his paradoxes. It was clear that the time was gone by when she could hope to penetrate his thoughts.

She looked at him rather helplessly. "And yet you intend to be a priest—and preach Christianity?"

"Christianity no longer exists. There are only a number of priests who fight about dogmas and adapt them to suit politicians and financiers."

"And yet you are going to be one?"

"For that very reason." He began to fill his pipe.

She rose, went slowly to the window and looked out. Then she turned to him. "Listen, Lo, do you really know what lies ahead of you?"

"A glorious task."

"A fearful struggle. It is not even certain that you will get into the church."

"Then I shall build my own."

"And—and do you need no help for that?" Again

she dropped her voice, and looked almost beseechingly at him.

He opened his eyes wide and gazed at her with a distant look, smiling as before. "No," he said, "it is not a question of timber. That is the simplest part of the matter."

This time she bent her head and stood gazing down for a moment. Then she looked round for her coat and hat.

He went on in an altered tone. "Let me show you what I'm busy collecting," and he brought out a copy-book in thick boards. "I am collecting the word of God—not from the Hebrews, but from seers who stand nearer us. Here is one from an old working-woman who has dragged coal sacks about all her life until she has ruptured herself on both sides. Both her husband and her sons drink, and she has had to provide for the whole crew. She is eighty years old now, but she's always in the best of spirits.

"A neighbor comes in one day and cajoles ten shillings out of her, declaring that her husband has fallen from a scaffolding and broken his legs. But the poor old thing learns soon after that the whole story was a lie. Do you know how she takes it? 'Just think,' she says, 'of telling lies about Our Lord.' I shall preach on that text some day."

"Do you often go to the working-men's quarters?"

"Yes. People there still have a backbone. And a living soul. The worst thing one could do to them

would be to improve their circumstances so that they would grow like West End folks."

"Do you like going among them?"

He put the book away and turned toward her. "No," he said.

"And all the same?"

"Can you understand why it is that they, who live in the midst of stench and darkness, are more open to . . ."

"Salvation," she put in, smiling.

"Yes, I can well believe that it was in such places the idea first arose."

"But you will have nothing to do with the idea."

"You keep yourself informed about me?"

"Surely there's no great harm in my trying to follow what you are doing?"

He went on with his train of thought. "The electric sun works miracles down in the mines. In broad daylight it is superfluous. And I am for broad daylight. We, who have grown up with a wide horizon, can find the divine by other means, and we need no savior."

"You will have many against you, Lo. And your sister—and your old home, you don't need any more?"

"There are things one must do alone. It may be different some day."

"Mother and father you have a use for, though."

"Well—they are a different matter."

She wondered if he was impatient for her to go.

"Where are you going at Christmas, Lo?" The question came very cautiously.

"I shall stay here and work."

"And I suppose you don't go to the theater any more now?"

He knew that she was thinking of that evening, but he answered calmly: "I have kept to myself for over a year now. I have to go in to lectures, of course, and now and again I take a ski tour. But otherwise I have condemned myself to live alone until I have . . . got a little more grip on one thing and another. You are no doubt right in saying that some things will be difficult." He passed his hand across his brow.

"Then we must hope that you will get over the difficulties." And now she came across to him and gave him her hand.

He stood at the window and saw her disappear down the hillside in the gray twilight. She walked with bent head, slowly. And only when it was too late did it occur to him that he ought at all events to have seen her to the station.

That night it was specially hard to get to sleep.

All the time that Louise was there he had felt a longing to go to her, give her a hug and say that all the rest was foolishness. But the other forces that held him back had got the upper hand.

"Sin? What is sin?"

"The last days at Bruseth, when you felt like a stranger on a visit, you managed to control yourself

and behave really well to her. Now, when you are a budding priest—now you have treated her so that she may perhaps never come again.

"And soon she will set her mind upon another man. Be sure that she will never miss you again after that day."

He lay there gazing back at memories from their childhood.

But there is a figure pacing the room again. Lorentz knows him, though it is dark. He is the true edition of himself. Ah, how differently *he* would have done everything to-day. He would have taken his sister wholly into his confidence; would have sat beside her on the sofa holding her hand; would have wished her every happiness if she had really found a lover; he would have promised to come to Bruseth at Christmas, and to-night he would have taken her out to the theater and to supper afterward.

Lorentz feels himself powerless. He seems to be sinking, sinking. Surely it profits him little to go about dreaming of a New Temple, and all the while himself . . .

He sees the wide landscape from Bruseth again, he hears the organ peal forth its hymn to eternity. But behind this landscape he catches sight of something else, of moral good, the greatest, the richest thing of all. But to enter into it, to feel himself one with it . . .

He looks at the figure pacing the floor. *He* always

did what was right, and, yet, now he had not a word of blame for him.

"Louise—have I lost you now forever?"

The figure standing there smiles and shakes his head.

"What, are you beginning to comfort me now? Who are you in reality?" But Lorentz falls asleep before he gets an answer.

VII

THE old woman in the garret had at last taken to her bed; she knew now that the time had come when she should get up no more.

And she was not sorry on the whole. Her husband had died that winter in the lockup, after a drinking bout; three of her sons were in prison, one for stealing, the other two for smuggling brandy. Her two daughters were married and lived near by, but they never came near their mother except when they were short of money. She had lain here these three days and nights and never seen a soul. She had knocked and knocked on the wall for the market-woman who lived in the next room to her, but not even late at night was there an answer, so the woman must have gone away. And she knew now that she would lie here and die all alone. If only she had a drop of water even.

Ah! at last there are steps on the stairs. Of course they can't be coming here. But they don't stop on the floor below after all. They are actually coming up here. And now there is a knock at her door. She turns her head and says, "Come in." It is the fair-haired young student who has been here before, the one who is to be a pastor soon.

"Good-day, Mother," he says cheerfully, raising his

bushy eyebrows. "Do I see you in bed in the middle of the day? Do you think there's time for that?"

"God bless you for coming up to see a poor old creature," she says, but with no complaint in her voice. "Aye, for now I'm done for." She gives him this simply as a piece of news.

He sits down by the bedside, and refuses to believe she is in earnest. They have always had so many jokes together. He says now, why, she is the youngest of them all! And she admits that she is. But there is an end to everything, and here she lies at last. As if by inadvertence he passes his hand over her sunken features—she has hardly a tooth in her mouth, her wisps of hair are white. Her eyes are misty.

"Yes, the game is all over now," she says. "And my young ones haven't very good memories either, it would seem, except when there's something they're after."

"I have tried to get you a place in the almshouse," he says. "But it's full at present. It will have to be the hospital. You can't lie here, you see."

He opens a packet—as usual he had brought something good with him. To-day it is a bottle of port wine and some cakes. She hasn't what you might call an appetite, but this is too tempting—one single cake and a little drop of wine she must put inside her. "Your health, Mother," says the young man, who has poured some wine into a coffee-cup and a tumbler. A little goes down the wrong way when she drinks; but afterward they look at one another and smile.

He gives himself a shake: "It's chilly here, and there's no sun either. Aren't you cold?"

"Oh, not when one lies in bed. And the rug you gave me is warm, and that's a great thing."

"It will soon be spring outside. Is it long since you were in the country?"

"In the country! God bless your soul, do you think I've had time to gad about like a rich man? No, except at the East Cemetery, where my husband has a job of earth-work now, I haven't seen green trees these twenty years, perhaps even more."

The student gaped. "Your husband has a job at the East Cemetery? But I thought he was dead?"

"Well, if he has lain buried there ever since Christmas, he has a job of earth-work right enough, I should say."

And the young man couldn't help laughing again at her drollery. Then he turned his head toward the little window in the roof, through which the sun had scarcely ever shone. A tin lark, with wings painted red, sat there always on its steel wire and was both sun and summer for her.

Then he began to tell her of the spring outside. Of the warmth that is making the roofs drip and bare patches stand out on the slopes above the Nordstrand. Of the snowdrops and blue anemones that he had found yesterday; of a little birch-tree down below his balcony that's already beginning to unfold its buds. She listens to him with eyes like a child's that is hearing wonder-

ful fairy-tales. The garret room, too, seems to brighten. It begins to smell of spring. The smoke-blackened ceiling turns to blue sky. And now that he is in the vein, he tells of his childhood's home, of the sunshine upon the open country-side, of moonlight nights with their path of silver stretching over the lake, while trees and fields and grass, dripping with dew, lie there glistening. He tries to pour into her soul something of the feeling that had intoxicated his own youth. It had begun as a game—he was smiling; but by degrees his eyes began to glow; he was carried away, he tried to make her hear the same symphony that the landscape up there had poured into his own ears. For the old woman it was a fairy-tale of a paradise far-away; but she saw it, she saw it, and at last she tried to lift her head off her pillow, so much better did she feel.

He folded his hands over his knee and forgot where he was. He was standing in the pulpit. A little more and he would be able to give form to the mass of soul-stuff of which the landscape round Bruseth was a symbol. Again it surges toward him like a tide of spiritual force. The seasons of the year are the changing ages of man; rain, sun, darkness, and storm are transformed into the emotions which have reared and fostered man's soul. This is the child's first lesson-book, telling of life and death and resurrection. This rewards the toil of the generations; this stores them away when they are ripe for the reaping; this raises their monuments in fields and meadows. Race after race disappears, but

this remains unchanged, lifted up into that which goes on for ever. Seat yourself upon a stone, lose yourself in the thought of this, and the emotion with which it fills you will perhaps be forgotten next day, but ten years hence it will rise up again in some good deed. It is youth that never ages, maturity that toils unceasingly; it is woman as maid, and as the fruitful mother that never tires of giving birth and rearing her young. All this it is.

The student forgot that he was sitting talking to a woman who was lying there on her death-bed. He did not see that her eyes were growing uneasy. He did not understand that already she was dizzy, and was trying to find something to which she might cling. There was something she wanted to ask about. But the young man had mounted a pulpit and saw before him the thousands he was aiming to lead onward to a higher, a more beautiful reality. He could not stop. The scent, the light, the colors, the rhythms of the wide expanses seen from Bruseth, were beginning to draw him on into the feeling of the all, of the everlasting unity which is called God.

And of this God he must speak a little, now that at last he sees Him. He does not hang upon a cross. He does not pursue mankind with threats. He craves no adoration. He only says: Open your eyes and ears that you may see and hear. He does not make slaves of mankind; he sets no snares for them in taboos and inter-

dicts. Youth may love without shame, the grown man make good his self without forever hearing about sin; the old man may look death in the face without fear. The world has grown beautiful, life and death are two sisters working together in the eternal day.

The woman lies gazing in front of her with eyes grown moist. It is long since she was at church, and now she is there once more. But from time to time she feels uneasy. Is all this right? This paradise is beautiful indeed, but it is late in the day for her to try to reach it, now that she is dying.

Suddenly she raises her eyes to him and asks: "Do you think there is mercy for a poor old soul like me?"

He gives a start. This question he was not prepared for. What should he answer? For he had not the least belief in that old story.

Her eyes sought out his. They were still full of trouble. Would he not answer?

"Do you think I have been too great a sinner?" she asks. "Is it too late, maybe, to repent now?"

Here he sits confronted by the very faith he wants to fight against: the traditional conception of man as sinner and God as grace-giving perfection. He has looked at it before at a distance, as a theory—here it is in human form. This old friend of his, this heroine of poverty and want, who had carried sacks of coal till she ruptured herself; who had supported a worthless crew that plagued and tortured her, and had kept

through it all her bright humor and cheer—now, in the presence of death and God, she has become a sinner beseeching for mercy.

He is not angered. It is only that he had never conceived the thing thus. It is as though he were gazing at yet another reality—that landscape glimpsed behind the visible one seen from Bruseth, that moral landscape which hitherto had appeared to his eyes so great, so measureless, but for him so mysterious. Here it is in human form.

Should he tell her that he did not believe in such a God, nor in any life hereafter? Could he rob her of her only gleam of light, now when she was about to die? No doubt she supposed that God had kept an eye on all her toil, and entered everything up in a book. What had been denied her in this life, she counted on finding in the next; but for that mercy was needful, it was needful that she feel her own unworthiness compared with the All-holy, with God Himself.

What had he to answer?

"I don't think you need any mercy," he said. "You, who have been such a toiler all your days. It is reward you have deserved, and you will surely get it."

He sat here, a traitor to himself, but he was serving the human being who lay before him. He saw himself for the first time as priest, not according to his own conception of the office, but for the sake of mankind, as a servant of the image of God, as tradition has shaped it in the mind of man.

But she says again: "Tell me—do you believe there is mercy for me?" A sinner she *must* be. Mercy she *must* have.

He smiles at her on the Lord's behalf. He strokes her old, wrinkled face. She understands him and begins to make confession. There *was* a brewer's man, that time they lived at Kampen, it's almost fifty years ago. And then—well perhaps it's her fault after all that the children have grown up as they have.

"Oh, my dear old mother!" he says, taking her hand.

"Now you must sing and read me something, you that are to be a priest. There's no knowing when I may go."

She lies there with her brown eyes fixed steadfastly on him. "There's an old psalm-book on the shelf over there, I think. And Johan Arnts's Family Sermons should be somewhere about too. But you can get along without them, you who have studied it all up."

Here was where his new religion met and clashed with the creed human beings take refuge in when they come to die. Did his avail nothing here?

Her face took on a look of suspicion. "Aye, for you're surely not one of those ungodly priests that believe neither in Our Lord nor the devil? Surely you believe that Jesus died for our sins?"

Lorentz looked round for help, and made as if to rise.

"Well, anyway, it's not worth while praying for an old rickle of bones like me," she went on presently.

"But there's Hans, my son, in the lockup—it's worse with him. He must need it badly enough. And Marja, my youngest daughter—she lets her children run about the streets, so that they learn neither manners nor God's word; you must ask Our Lord to be merciful to her. I've put up a prayer myself, but one from a man that's read and studied ought to help more. And then there's Jens, the next oldest boy. He was up here one day I was out in the town with sacks, and he pinched the few crowns I had in the chest of drawers over there. If Our Lord has mercy to give, he couldn't give it where it's more needed. I can just as well take my chance."

"You don't mind so much about yourself then?" He smiled as he bent over her.

"Oh, I've got along more or less in this life, though it's often been hard enough, and I dare say things will come right somehow in the next."

And again he stroked her cheek, and she looked at him and smiled.

Before he goes he pours her out another drop of wine, and promises to come and see her when she has been taken to hospital.

The rotten planks on the stairs crack under his feet as he goes down. It is an old, tumble-down house, and in the courtyard, where the snow is melting, he is met by a sickening stench. By the gateway to the street is a board with a notice in black chalk: Commit no nuisance in this entry. It has had little effect.

He went to the doctor, who promised to see that the woman was removed to Ullevaal at once. But as he walked home over the Ekeberg in the gloomy spring day he was full of strange thoughts. Was it true that the New Temple, the new confession he had dreamed of, was only an article of luxury? For the sick and those that live in darkness—what had he for them?

Up on the hill he sits down on a roadside block, shoves his hat back off his brow, and looks long at the glowing clouds far away in the west. He cannot take his mind off this woman in her garret, who, when it came to the point, was willing to give up all claim to mercy for herself, if only she might get her vicious children safely into heaven.

It is one thing to patch together a creed. But when you come in contact with life, with mankind—perhaps with something greater still—what then?

VIII

Louise, too, awoke one day to find that she needed her parents.

It is autumn and the hills are yellow. She alights from the train at the station up there in the dale, takes her brown handbag and sets out to walk.

No one knows the young woman in the gray walking-dress and the brown veil. But she steps out now like one who knows the way. Even now she has a curious feeling, as if Mother Bruseth were sitting up in her grave and asking: what is this you are doing? But alas! over and over again she has found herself obliged to act contrary to Mother Bruseth's views. Life has its laws for the present hour, and the dead must not rule over the living.

In the evening she is sitting in the little cottage with the two old folks, who make a great event of having her there again. It is true they have exchanged letters during the two years since she was here last, but she has kept herself at a certain distance, for she has the feeling that for them it is Lorentz and always Lorentz. That she should be mistress of all the widow at Bruseth has left behind, is probably both a virtue and a fault in their eyes. They will not come on a visit. Her father says he is not well enough, and her mother will not leave him. Well, they must do as they please.

But now they are sitting there gazing at her with beaming faces. Her father has broken his latest vow of abstinence and filled himself a pipe. Every now and again he has to get up and walk round her. Her mother sits sewing, and her face lights up when she looks at her daughter.

It looks as if they have no idea that there is anything amiss between her and Lorentz. They hardly take time to ask whether she has got the crops in, before they are back to Lorentz again, always Lorentz. It is clear that they think he has a great work in hand, and that he has their silent sympathy and help. "He will found a free church some day," says her father, and begins to pace the floor. Then he gives a little lecture on places of worship in divers lands. It is clear that Lorentz must devise a form for his building suited to our type of scenery. His temple must be in keeping with the fir-clad hills, the mountains, the dales, the hard winter weather, and the bright summers. As are the dwellings of the people. It can be this, and at the same time be light and festal. After that Merle and he begin talking at once. It appears that she would not think it such a great misfortune if the boy were to be a pastor of the State Church, but the mere thought makes Peer quite furious.

It is not difficult to see which of the two children is with them all day long when they are alone together here. "Are these two really your parents?" she thinks. "Is it they whose advice you are going to ask?"

She grows very silent; and her silence seems to in-

fect the old folks. At the supper table there are long pauses. They look at her with anxious little smiles. Perhaps there is a degree of coldness about her—how can she get the better of it? At last her father begins to tell of what a wonderful maid they have got. At the store she gets more for their butter than anyone else in the parish, and she must be something of a conjurer, for coffee and eggs and all kinds of foodstuffs last endlessly when she gets them into her hands. They both look at Louise, twinkling a little. They don't want to know too much of how it all happens. At least he does not.

At last she is in bed in the little room again. There is a smell of cheese here. Clothes are hanging on the wall. It is a real poor man's house. And to think that these parents of hers were once quite wealthy folk. And they might live with her like wealthy folk now—were it not that nothing in the world would induce them to trick themselves out with the wealth left by the Widow at Bruseth. It is not to their taste. And that, too, is no doubt the reason why they feel toward her as they do.

"Well, Louise—you must make up your mind, then, to being alone. If ever you should be really at a loss what to do, there is no one you can turn to."

As she lies there, the thought that fills her mind is that, if her mother had been really closely drawn to her, she would have noticed that there was something amiss. And then she would have come out here, sat

down on the edge of the bed and taken her hand. It's so easy for two people to talk to each other in the dark.

"My dear child," she would say, "now you must come out with this thing that is weighing on you."

"But, Mother dear—why should you think there is anything the matter, merely because I have run up here to see you?"

"Oh, you can't take me in. Come now, tell me the whole story."

Louise draws a long breath, as if she were really preparing herself for a confession. It is difficult not to open one's heart when two kind, work-worn mother's hands clasp one's own. And the darkness helps too. Before she knows what she is about she finds herself lying there making a confession. Oh, what it is to have a mother at last in whom one has perfect trust. And what a relief it is, too, to be able to tell everything.

It's a hard job for anyone to be young and rich. There are so many things that hurt one. Her brother, for example. She has tried to see things with his eyes. He suspects her, though at the same time he knows that she is innocent. He has most likely struggled to rise above his great disappointment, but it is beyond his power. He cannot bear to visit his only sister, because he would have to look upon the manor and all those glories that should have been his. He is to be a priest. He is taken up with things of the most sacred import, and some day no doubt will preach about them. But he cannot bring himself to forgive his own sister

because she has received a greater share of worldly goods than he. That is a real sorrow. It's true she had had some experience before of what men are like, but that her brother . . . it hurts a good deal. It is not pleasant to have these things to think of all by oneself.

"Can you not try to help him over it?" asks her mother.

"I have tried to, time after time. I cannot try any more now. After all, I have a little pride of my own, too. I went to him once and fairly besought him. But, depend upon it, I shall never do it again."

Then she goes on with her confession. She, like others, would like well enough to go about and amuse herself with young men. But here again suspicion comes in. She might catch fire herself. But dare she? If she should actually give way, it would not be a question of love only. It would be a question of letting a stranger into Bruseth. But suppose she awoke one day to discover that she herself had only been taken as part of the bargain. Oh, oh! What if he were to ruin the whole place—Mother Alme had known something of what that meant.

But to take a husband who would be willing to be his wife's servant—that would be almost worse. And could she herself give up the reins?

"Can't you understand, Mother, what a tangle it all is? What am I to do about it? Go unmarried all my days—no, no! I am inclined to be a little mannish al-

ready. But I don't want to be that. I want to be a woman. I want to be a mother. Do you hear?"

And now she presses the hands of this woman tight—the woman who ought to have been sitting here.

"Is there anyone special, my child?" asks her mother; and even in the dark Louise can see that she smiles.

"No, no. No one in particular. That is to say—perhaps after all there might be someone."

"I thought as much," says her mother. "And now you must tell me everything."

It does not take very long to tell. He is an officer, a lonely man living in the town below. There is so much about him that she likes, but a great deal also that she does not care about. But at all events, there is such good stuff in him, it would be tempting to try whether she could not make something really first-rate out of it. She could give him what he needs to set him on his legs. And then there's another question: has she not given him more encouragement already than she ought to have? Perhaps she has let him come so far into her life that it is too late to draw back. But there are times when she is so afraid that she is playing too risky a game. If she were even quite sure that she cares for him enough. She is sure while they are together. But, when she is alone, she begins to think and doubt.

Louise sighs. It is all out now. What ought her mother to say?

"It is so difficult to give advice," she ought to say.

"But so much I am sure of: bad as it may be to disappoint him, it would be still worse for you to do anything you had to regret."

Is this all a mother can say? Can she not see into her own child's very heart and tell her what she should do? Ah, no, perhaps she cannot do that.

"Good-night, child. Try to sleep now." And she draws the coverlet better around her, then rises slowly and goes. The mother has received a confidence; quite a nest-egg for her to live upon in thought. But the daughter—what has she got?

No, Louise—it does not pay to confide in anyone. No one in the world can give you advice. It is as well that all this confession to your mother is only fancy. You have not given yourself away to anyone.

Next morning the door opens and a white-haired woman comes in with coffee on a tray. Her face is lit with a little covert smile of delight at being able to do things for a grown-up daughter. It is so seldom she gets the chance.

"Oh, Mother, you shouldn't do this."

"Have you slept well?"

"Splendidly," says Louise.

That day goes somewhat better than the day before. Louise goes about in high spirits. The awkwardness has been got over. These parents of hers have become so dear to her, not because they have been able to help her, but just because, as things are with them, it is quite impossible that they should help. And if they

cling to their son first and foremost, it is because he is nearly as poor as they themselves—because he was wronged like them by the widow at Bruseth—and like themselves he has had his trials and struggles to go through. Therefore it is he that is always in their minds. She looks at them, feeling how touching this is, and that, strangely, she loves them all the more for it.

She goes about all day long, filling the house with youth and brightness. Again she gets her father to chase her round the house. She runs like a little girl. Thank goodness—there are no cares to worry one here, not even a telephone. No duties weigh upon her. She forgets that she is a millionairess. For the time she is a daughter of poor cottage folks. All the time she and her mother are laying their heads together in the little kitchen, or else she is in the smithy with her father. The cow, tethered out to grass, must be shifted; and off she flies and does it—shouldn't a daughter of the house take a hand in the work? She sits with them in the evening and darns her father's stockings, while he paces the floor, and, fired by having her for audience, holds forth about the world-communications of the future. And now and then her mother sends her a gentle but searching glance. What is the real reason that she has come here just at this particular time?

Next day she sets off for home. The two old people stand on the platform as the train moves off. It is her hand she waves from the carriage window, for her handkerchief is constantly needed to go to her eyes.

IX

WINTER had come, with leaden-gray days, and Louise and Captain Rud were out skiing. As they climbed the hill her cheeks grew redder, and locks of dark hair flew loose from under her gray cap. She was using two ski-sticks, he only one.

"Where are we going to-day?" he asked.

"That is a great secret."

He smiled a little. She was so sure that all she had to do was to beckon with her little finger; but it was probably his own fault. Could anyone make head or tail of a woman like this? One day he would feel that they were such good friends—even more than friends; the next she would meet him with a face that held him at a distance. Lately she had not even been inclined to let him set foot on the manor; she always telephoned: meet me at this place—or at that place! And, for a long time now, he hadn't been invited to any of her parties. They would meet, discuss things that interested them freely and on equal terms, often have violent disputes and end in joking and laughter. But he always felt that he was being weighed and measured, and it made him stiff and brusque. He had not her wealth, but he was no errand boy. They were constantly skirmishing with one another. It looked as if she did not care a straw

what he felt, nor was he any the wiser for his constant brooding over what her real feelings might be.

When they had gone on for a while, she said: "However, I don't mind confiding in you,[1] Captain Rud; we're going to see a cottager who is lying sick."

"Are we on formal terms to-day?"

"Yes, it is only when we're riding that we drop the formalities. Wasn't that agreed upon?"

"Am I to go with you to cure your cottager?"

"Perhaps you don't want to?" She raised her dark eyebrows.

He smiled again and went on without answering.

A great bird starts up and flies off with a great racket in a cloud of snow. It makes a little adventure for them, and for a moment they stand looking at one another.

How alone they are here in the deep forest. Everywhere high, thick-growing fir-trees, powdered with snow—the same pointed church spires above and below them, in front and behind, league upon league. It is her forest.

"How is your new Corn Law getting on?" she asks. "I see you are writing to the papers about it." She tries to hide a smile. He is assuredly no farmer.

"Naturally, it is not getting on."

"You can't get the Storthings-men from up here to support you?"

[1] Louise uses the formal *De* (Fr. *vous*), instead of the familiar *du* (Fr. *tu*).

"No, the people here are too well-fed and sleepy. When there have been good harvests regularly every year for generations, people get stupefied. It is want, disaster and anxiety that keep the spark in us alive. And that's the reason, too, why the districts up here have never produced a man of any eminence."

"And that is for want of bad years and famine, you think?"

"Yes, that's what I think."

"My brother wouldn't agree with you."

His gray eyes glanced at her aside: "Do you always need your brother to help you to think?"

"You dislike my mentioning him?"

"Oh, not at all. But I have an impression that every time you deign to fix your eyes on me, you are disappointed that I am not your incomparable brother."

The answer was a little too cavalier. Otherwise there was much that she might have been tempted to tell him about this.

They came now to a fence, and inside, on a square plot of ground, stood two small houses—a white cottage and a red byre. "Here we are," she said.

"Shall I wait for you here?"

"No, I would rather you came in with me."

She bent her head somewhat hesitatingly as she said this. It was as though she were letting him into something he had been shut out from till now.

They entered a bright, airy room with painted floor and ceiling, and paneled walls. A youngish woman got

up from her sewing-machine, a couple of children stuck their fingers in their mouths and stared, and in a bed in the farther wall lay a man of forty, with red beard and sunken cheeks.

Louise and the captain exchanged glances. It was as though they drew closer together in these new surroundings. But at the same time each was watching how the other behaved here—it was a sort of new standard whereby to measure one another.

It seemed that she was on good terms with her people. The young wife spoke to her so frankly, the children came and hung upon her skirts, the man in the bed looked at the "Young Lady," as they all called her now, and smiled.

"I have a good friend with me to-day," says Louise. "Yes, we know him," laughs the woman, and her eyes add something more, as she looks at the pair. Louise seats herself by the bed and gives the captain a glance that asks him to sit beside her. As lady of the manor she has to make an important decision, but this time is almost seems as if she needed the help of a lord of the manor. Or is it an instinct prompting her to take the measure of the captain in a situation like this? He comes and sits down beside her, and a slight flush passes over his face.

The man in the bed has stomach pains; he has been laid up in bed for several weeks, and the doctor cannot find out what is the matter. "If we only had the new hospital ready," says Louise, "we would have had

a first-rate surgeon too. You might just as well have waited till next year, Peter—we shall be ready by then, if all goes as it ought. But now I see nothing for it but to get you into the State Hospital. What do you think, Captain Rud?"

The captain begins to question the sick man, and as they talk Louise glances at him now and then from the corner of her eye. Though she is hardly aware of it, every faculty in her is on the watch. How does he behave to people like these? It is not a question of whether he is severe or kind to them; rather it is whether he can adapt himself, whether he catches the right tone. And that is exactly what he does. He speaks sensibly and frankly, without overdone familiarity, and so he wins their confidence, and both man and wife begin to talk to him.

"The State Hospital costs a lot, doesn't it?" asks the wife.

But at that the man closes his eyes and smiles. Is he thinking of the Widow of Bruseth? Strict as she was, she never spared the pence if there were anything seriously the matter with her people. And, of course, it will be the same with the new mistress that is sitting here now.

"Well, we must try and get you on your legs again," says Louise, and the captain notices that the pretty young face is full of thought and concern. But there is certainly no sentimentality in it. She is only trying to think out the best way of managing the thing.

"The County Provident Fund will pay most of it, no doubt," suggests the captain, wishing to comfort the wife. But at that Louise throws him an ironical glance, which he understands at once. He has spoken like an employer of day labor; but at Bruseth there are certain unwritten laws that held good in the old mistress's time, and that hold good now.

"I should say, too, that something must depend on what the doctor thinks," he says, as a diversion.

"But, good Heavens, there have been two medicine-men here, and they don't understand an atom more about it than we do. And the man can't go on lying here like this."

On this Captain Rud nods like one who has come to a decision, and Louise rises. They understand each other. They have settled this matter in concert.

But before they go, Louise takes the woman of the house aside and talks to her. She goes with her into the next room to look at her weaving. When she comes back, she bends over the two children and gives them a cake of chocolate. He notices that in here she speaks the dialect of the district, and that it seems quite natural to her. There is no artificial familiarity about it. She and the woman are friends, that is all.

As they are standing outside strapping on their skis, he says: "I have plenty of time to spare these days. If you have no one better, I could quite well take the man in to the city."

"Thanks, but I think we'll get a motor ambulance up."

He looked at her. "That won't be cheap."

She did not answer; and he felt a little foolish. What business was it of his?

They fly over the slopes in the gray twilight. The descent is very steep, their skis gather way; she crouches down at the right moment as she passes under the branches that scatter snow upon her, then stands up again and gets her balance, and has to crouch again at once as she rushes along. He follows, shouting to her not to take such a steep line, but she does not hear. At last they are back on the highway, where the snow-plow has heaped the snow up on either side. They are out of breath, and look at one another, laughing. And from here they look out over the wide landscape of hills and farm-lands, with the lake in the midst, now a white sheet of ice and snow. They see a yellow light come out here and there on the farms, leagues away.

She stood leaning on her ski-sticks looking at the scene. At last she said, "Do you like living in these parts?"

"Yes; if I didn't I should doubtless live somewhere else." And now his eyes grew watchful again. He had a feeling that he was to be put on trial.

"Do you think it's pretty too, down in the town where you live? Isn't it rather huddled up—like a rookery?"

"Don't call my home names!"

She turned her full face toward him. "I meant—don't you think it's prettier up here?"

"Oh, but you mustn't look down so on a little wooden town like ours. Its horizon is not so wide, to be sure; but then it is all so close to one. The whole town is like a cottage one can live in and be happy. One almost feels as if the houses and streets were one's relations. Doors and windows are so many faces which have gazed at you a hundred times. When you turn your back on them, there are some that speak ill of you, and some that take your part. If you go toward them, some are churlish and others inviting. And then there is the smell. A little wooden town like that has an odor of its own; partly paint, partly newly-planed wood, besides the wind and rain and dust and snow, and together they blend into a mingled scent that seems to breathe all the seasons of the year at once into your face. No, a little town like that is one of the most delightful things in the world."

She listened, with bent head, looking down at her skis. It certainly could not be said that he agreed with her too easily. Perhaps he dreamed of being master at Bruseth, for the sake of the property, to get himself a standing, so that people should one day take him in earnest. (Or was it perhaps a little for her sake too?) But it would never occur to him to carry his head a hair's-breadth lower on that account. It was at times

like this that she would have liked to go to him and throw herself upon his neck—and this frightened her so that she did the opposite and shrank into herself.

"If you have so much time to spare," she said suddenly, "perhaps you could come in for a moment." And now she looked away, for she felt a flush spread over her face.

He pulled out his watch. "Thanks, but to-night, for once in a way, I have something to do."

"Yes, but what if your father and mother have eaten up your dinner?"

"Then I'll gnaw the bones."

"So you refuse to have dinner with me?"

"Refuse?"

How awkward she could make him seem, she thought; but only for an instant; next moment he would lift his head again and have his revenge.

"Come now," she said and took him by the arm companionably. "And perhaps we might drop formalities for the evening, even though we're not out riding. You surely don't want me to sit and eat all alone—the housekeeper is away at a funeral."

The manor buildings lay already in the white glow of the arc-light. The snow-covered roofs shone dazzlingly. The courtyard was all silver, with only here and there a house-wall in shadow.

For the first time she took him with her to the stables. Inside she stopped in the middle of the floor and whistled soothingly to the two rows of black, bay,

and chestnut beasts, stamping in their stalls and looking at the two. There, too, he saw the gray blood-mare he had been allowed to ride once and never again.

A couple of young horses, standing at the farthest end of the stable, began rearing and pulling at their halters. She called to the stable-men, who were busy foddering the beasts: "Have those two not been out to-day?" "We haven't had time," they replied. "Nonsense. I want them to go out and have a trot every single day; remember that in future."

She speaks like the master of the place—and there in the middle of the floor stands a soldier, of medium height, blond, clean-shaven, not exactly handsome nor distinguished-looking, but with stuff in him to make something of a leader of men. An officer without an army, a man of intelligence whose interests are too wide for the smart set of a little town to suffer him. Put him on a great manor, and he will have room to develop. But the risk? "Do you love him? Dare you?"

"Do you like my horses?"

He laughed.

"Well. Is it so strange that I should ask?"

"Yes. For I am a countryman without land, and a horseman without horses. It's easy for you to make fun of me."

"Aren't you a woman-lover without a wife, too?"

"No."

"You can't be troubled with us women?"

"No. I cannot talk to women. When I am in a

woman's—I beg your pardon, a lady's—company, I am always putting my foot in it."

"As for instance with me at present?"

"You? That's quite another thing."

"Would you like to see the byre? You ought to know a little of what things are like here."

Captain Rud begins to feel the ground wavering curiously beneath him. What does she mean by this? As she leads him round the farm from one building to another it is as though she were drawing him nearer and nearer in to her. Is this a test, a game? Will she take her revenge when they meet to-morrow?

X

The big room is bright with the light from the electric chandelier, and he sits there a good while waiting, while she changes her things. Whisky, soda, and cigars have been set beside him, but he does not touch any of them.

He feels that something will happen between them to-night, but he does not know what, and it is not even certain that she who is now changing her dress knows. She probably does not mean simply to play with him, and yet it may turn out to be only play even now. He thinks: if she had not such a kingdom—would she be a princess for you all the same? He nods: yes, she would. But then she would be less capricious, and he would be able to advance to the attack more boldly. Women? It's a fact that he has not troubled his head much about them; not about her either at first; it was she herself who began it, who called to him, so to speak. And one day he had opened his eyes and found that his peace of mind was gone. From that moment there was no one but her, her alone! To think that love is like this! Then perhaps she saw how things were with him, and the game began—but now, he thinks, it has gone far enough. Whatever may happen to-night, he will be on his guard.

And now she comes in, in a light yellow dress, white silk stockings, and patent leather shoes. As she comes near he notices a delicate perfume. The ski-runner and the woman of the stables is transformed into a lady of fashion. He rises: "What," he breaks out, "and . . . and I have only been able to wash my hands." "Yes," she says, "I suppose you have been boring yourself; but now you see what it is like to sit all alone in big rooms." "Is it so very bad?" "Perhaps you don't mind whether I do or not?" "Has it anything to do with me?" he retorts, throwing his head back and laughing. "I didn't say it had. But if you were . . . if you had a wife, even then I'm sure you would leave her to sit all alone. You would find someone else to gad about with." "You are mistaken," he says, suddenly quite serious. "I am too egoistic. That is to say—of course she might be quite impossible."

A girl with a white cap on her head opens the door to the dining-room.

"Well, come along," says Louise, taking his arm.

The paneling, the sideboard, and the high-backed chairs in the oblong dining-room are of dark oak; the center light is not lit, but upon the white cloth stand silver candlesticks with lighted candles.

So here they sit together, these two. The girl serves them, goes out, is away for a time, then comes in again.

"This is the first time we two have had a meal together alone, is it not?" She half shuts her eyes.

"Yes, it is the first time."

"Are you quite sure it won't be the last?"

"Quite sure."

"What?" She laughed and raised her eyebrows.

"You can't do without me. You need me to have a skirmish with now and again; and then you must have someone, partly to look down on and partly to be sorry for."

"No doubt you think you can see right through me?"

"I don't think it's so very difficult. There is nothing out of the way about you, when all's said and done."

"Perhaps you've had a little experience with women, after all?"

"Can't we talk of something else? How is your brother getting on?"

"Your health." She lifted her claret glass, but forgot to drink—she was gazing at one of the candles with an almost imperceptible smile.

"What are you thinking of now?" she says suddenly, looking at him.

"I am standing on guard."

"What—why?"

"I see that you would like to have a fight with me again—but you wouldn't like to beat me."

"Beat a warrior—good heavens, no."

"Your health!" he says, lifting his glass.

Against the background of the dark paneling he sees her yellow dress and fresh, rosy face, at the moment both gay and troubled. He has the upper hand so far, but he must look out for a new onset.

"So you think I cannot do without you?"

He shakes his head.

"And you are standing on guard—now, with me?"

"You are, too."

"I? Well, really . . ."

"We are both on our guard. You for your wealth, and I for my poverty. We are defending what we have, both of us."

"You're certainly very candid to-night." She stared at him and forgot to eat.

Smiling all the time, he spoke lightly and jestingly. "If you hadn't a kingdom to defend, you would not go about watching us as you do."

"So—that is what you think?"

"And measuring and weighing us to see if one or the other may be good enough."

"Well, that's plain speaking, at any rate."

She tried to laugh.

He lifted his glass again, held it up to the light, and said, as though to it: "If you were poor, I would ask you to marry me. Then we might share our poverty."

"And as I am not, you think you would have to take a back seat—like the midwife's old man?"

He drank, laughed once more, and, again addressing his glass, "I hope you won't end like the Widow at Bruseth."

"Shall we talk of something else?"

"I have nothing to lose, so we can talk of anything you like."

"Have you nothing to lose?"

He shook his head.

"Not even me?"

"You? One can't lose what one hasn't got."

"Are you so sure of that?" She laughed, but immediately grew serious and gazed at the candle again.

It was the first time she had noticed that he had grown impatient. To-night he was putting the thing to the touch. He wasn't going to let her take the lead any longer. And, in her heart, she liked this.

They rose and went into the innermost room, where birch logs were burning in the fireplace. She turned off the light, so that, but for the reddish glow from the fire, the room was in darkness.

She had coffee brought in; they sat each in a deep arm-chair, with feet stretched to the fire; he lit her cigarette and then his cigar. She poured out his coffee, and, after, they sat in silence for a time.

She felt that she would like to let him come a little nearer still. She fetched an album, opened it and laid it upon his knees. "These are my father and mother," she said in a low voice.

While he was bending over the two portraits, she had gone back to her former seat, and was smoking slowly, gazing into the fire. A voice within her cried: "He mustn't come any closer."

"Your mother must have been beautiful," she heard him say.

"Yes."

He fixed his eyes on Louise, and his look said that he thought she was like her mother, but he bent over the portraits again in silence.

"Would you like to hear something about my parents?"

And before she knew it, she was in the midst of the story of the old couple struggling with poverty up yonder in the dale, who had once lived such a very different life. She felt how she was being carried off her feet, once she gave way to the pent-up longing to speak freely to someone she cared for. He listened to her, forgetting his cigar, and looking at her and at the fire by turns—he seemed to have grown actually handsome of a sudden. But all the time a voice within her was crying: why are you doing this—with this strange man?

"As it happens, I remember when they owned Loreng and were living there," he said, after they had been silent a while. "I was only a boy, of course, but they drove such fine horses, and that was a thing to impress a youngster."

But now Louise let herself go more and more. She heard herself ask: "And my brother—what do you think of him?"

He shook his head and smiled. "I know so little of him."

"Do you know how things are between him and me?"

"Isn't he your ideal man?"

"Hm." Before long she was beginning to open her heart about this too. Not only about what divided them, but how much she had felt it; and all the times she had tried to win him back again. But at last she sat up suddenly with a start and passed her hand across her eyes. "But, gracious, now I've surely confessed enough for to-night. I don't believe you are even listening. All the same, very many thanks for having stayed and wasted your time with a lonely female."

He rose and stood looking at her.

A revulsion from all this intimacy came over her. She was ashamed, excited. She looked at this man, half a stranger to her, with flashing eyes:

"What must you think of me, sitting here turning my private affairs inside out? You don't care a bit about them, of course. You've no doubt been sitting here thinking of something quite different, and letting me talk and twaddle away. Isn't that so?"

"I see you want me to go," said he. "Good-night."

She did not take his hand. "Are you going?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well—go then. Good God, to think, too, that you should be such an egoist."

"Yes, I am so," he said, moving a step or two toward the door.

"It's as well you admit it yourself. And so this is how it is to end!" She choked a little, trying to keep back her rage. "We—we have been happy together out of doors. But this is how it is to end!"

"Yes, things happen so sometimes," he said calmly, looking at her.

"You don't even venture to contradict me. Is it because you are a coward?"

"Yes, that is it," he said, as calmly as before.

She stared at him open-mouthed. "I—I have never in all my life . . . Do you stand there and admit it . . . ?"

"I stand here, as you say, thinking of other things. I see that being in such a rage is extraordinarily becoming to you."

"Good-night." She held out her hand.

And she went with him into the hall, where he found his cap and wind-jacket. She stood looking after him till he was near the gate into the avenue. Then she called: "Hullo! Captain Rud!"

He turned. "Yes?"

"Ring me up to-morrow."

"Thanks, but I cannot promise."

"Won't you?"

"Good-night." And his figure disappeared among the trees.

It was still early in the evening, but when she had sat alone for an hour or two before the hearth, doing nothing but staring into the fire, she got up and was on the point of going to the telephone. But she sat down again and laid fresh logs on the fire, and went on gazing in front of her as before. She heard her watch, in the gold bracelet on her wrist, ticking, ticking. When

at length she looked at it, it was eleven o'clock. Then she started up, went to the telephone and rang. She heard a woman's voice in the distance answer: "No, Captain Rud hasn't come home yet."

She gives a message asking him to ring up Bruseth as soon as he comes in. She is behaving like a child, but this must be the last of the thing.

What can have become of him? He should have been home several hours ago.

So she sits down before the fire again, waiting for the telephone to ring. She does not take a book, nor any work, she can and will do nothing but sit here and be miserable, waiting and waiting for the telephone to ring.

And at last, past midnight, it rings.

She knows the voice, and asks sharply: "Where in all the world have you been since you left here?"

"I went for a run."

"Did you need such a long run to work off your bad temper?"

"Was there anything special, Fröken Alme, to make you ring up so late?"

"I only wanted to ask what your Christian name is. Isn't it Jörgen?"

"Yes—but . . ."

"Good-night then, Jörgen."

XI

His long solitude had not helped him. His wanderings about the room at all hours of the night had not led him where he wished. At times he lost heart and would fain have given it all up. In this that he was doing, was he only wasting the best years of his youth? An everyday priest in an ordinary church? Never!

It was now that his mind and body avenged themselves, and drove him out among his companions again. To row or swim alone is not the same thing as when there are competitors; to wander off alone on skis is not the same as to make one of a hulloing crowd of comrades. How it freshened one up to knock about with young people again. Yet even in the jolliest company he would often feel a certain unrest. When he ran out along the spring-board to take a header into the sea, the thought would always rise within him: if you catch a cramp while you're diving, what then? And in a sports-hut, after a ski-run through snow and cold, he would look at his noisy comrades sitting there with their pipes, and think: what if deep down in their hearts the same struggle is going on as in yours? They are only feigning. This care-free surface is not their real self. The same thoughts rose when he swung round with a young girl in a dance: who knows—when she has put out her light to-night and shuts her eyes in the dark-

ness, what then? Is it of flirting, of the tango and the latest fashions that she thinks, or . . . ?

Could he even be a priest for the young? Was it not for that he had taken up theology? But suppose it was all time wasted? Was he nearer his goal now than when he started? No.

After a specially gay evening, when he came home and went to bed, he would sometimes lie awake with a feeling of indefinable well-being. His mind and his senses were so tinglingly astir that it would have been nonsense to go to sleep. Good God, what a great and rich and glorious place the world was to work and play in. Again the sense of the universal soul came over him —all things were spirit, all things were God.

Was his religion not ready, then, for use? Could he not go up into the pulpit to-morrow? No—one little thing was wanting. It must be made simple, so that mankind could understand. He bethought him of the old woman in the garret, lying at the point of death—he had not been able to reach her. A priest must be able to help mankind. And men understand all things only from the human point of view. They must have the universal in human form. Only in this way do they understand God. Is that the secret of the belief in Christ? Yes, but he does not go far enough, he saves only sinners. Can you then create a new God? What name will you give Him? After all, that is what you have undertaken. Can you do it? What are the difficulties you will have to face?

At last he sighs. It will probably end as he fears. It will all have been nothing but time wasted. Perhaps modern man needs neither Temple nor holy day any more.

A dozen miles outside the city lies a little red-brick church, with a forest of old and new tombstones about it. One Sunday, well on in spring, service was drawing to a close when a young man on a bicycle turned up from the highroad. He looked about him as though astonished to find a church just there. He leaned his cycle against the wall, wiped the sweat from his brow, took the clips off his trousers, and went in through the gate. There were a few people among the graves, but all was quiet within the church, and he supposed that the sermon was going on.

For a time he went slowly round among the graves, reading an inscription on a tombstone here and there. At last he seated himself, pushed his cap off his brow, plucked a piece of grass and began absent-mindedly to twist it in his fingers. It is so quiet here. An overclouded sky; level stretches of ground with farms, and strips of woodland in between. Out in a field stands a plow, left alone and horseless for Sunday. A motor-car hoots far away. On a farm a horse neighs. But here in the churchyard it is still. About him are the silent tombstones, above those who lie still there and sleep.

He falls into a dream. Once those now gathered here were alive like you. Young men and women, of whom

but a part lived to be old. They lie here now. As you will do some day. If they were allowed to open their eyes for a moment, they would doubtless take hold again of their childhood's faith and sing a hymn. It is as though he heard it, the song of the dead. "So we believed. And what do you believe? Have you deserted us? Are you a traitor to the holy powers whose chiming bells called us together so many a Sunday, and who were with us at the end when we closed our eyes? What have you in their stead?"

He bends his head. He has so often heard the call: unite yourself with the others, share their faith, become one of them. Does he know better than they? Delusions? Yes, but such delusions may be truth, groping, but on the right way. Is he too good to keep company with them, to grope his way in the same direction, to rest at the same resting-places? Is he not one of them? Are they not so near to him that he can cast in his lot with them? Do not the same bells from out yonder in eternity call upon him as they have called and called on all the rest?

He sits on and on. The piece of grass has crumbled in his fingers. At last he rises and goes slowly toward the church-door, sets his foot upon the step and goes in.

The communion service is going on inside. And he remains standing at the west end of the church looking toward the choir and the altar. He forgets to sit down. Something has made him gaze with all his eyes.

Before the altar stands a young, beardless priest, not

much older than himself, in red canonicals with the golden cross. Why does Lorentz gaze at him? He seems to him so beautiful. He has never seen such loftiness in a human being before; there is a gleam on his face as though he had come down from a higher sphere and in a little while would mount up to it again. And at his feet, in a half-circle, kneel the communicants—common folk from farms and factories, a couple of bald-headed old men with a circle of hair round their ears, ladies in hats, a few women in coifs, some young, some old. They bow their heads devoutly. And the young priest goes slowly from one to the other, lays his brown hands upon their heads, saying, on behalf of God, that their sins are forgiven them.

The young man at the end of the church is still standing there, forgetting to sit down; but now he has to steady himself with a hand upon the back of a seat. He cannot understand why this simple scene affects him so much, but he goes on standing there.

Now they rise, these men and women, and come slowly down to their seats in the church; others take their places and kneel as they did. But they who come down the aisle have the same light in their faces as the priest—they have been up in another sphere. They have knelt before the face of God.

What is the Lord's Supper? Lorentz asks himself. It began as a memorial feast, then men groped their way onward and exalted it to a meeting with the godhead, before which one must cleanse one's soul of the evil

one had done. And he who had not the power to do so himself, came hither with his faults and prayed to God to take them away, and the priest saw his repentance and laid his hands on the poor creature's head: "Thy sins are forgiven thee!"

Lorentz, Lorentz! Can you find anything that will take the place of this?

Such a wave of emotion sweeps over him that he sinks into a chair.

As the congregation went out, people saw this young stranger sitting there by himself. At length he seemed to waken, he got up and followed the others. He must have forgotten his cap, for he went bareheaded to his cycle, swung himself on to it and rode slowly away. At the turn of the road he missed his pedals and was within an ace of losing his balance; then he pulled himself together, bent forward, put on speed and disappeared.

XII

His birthday came round soon after this, and when he came home from the city in the evening, a packet was lying on his table. He knew the writing, it was from his mother. There! she had been knitting him stockings or mittens again. But the contents, when he opened it, were a surprise. They were a collection of letters, and some of them were yellow with age. What is this? Oh, here is a letter with them. His mother says that she is sorry she has not got any other gift ready for him this birthday. But perhaps it will interest him to see that she had not forgotten him entirely when he had left home as a very little boy. It was true his new mother had put a stop to correspondence, but no one could stop her writing, even though the letters had not been sent.

Late that evening he is sitting reading by the lamp. The very first letter, written when he was four years old, makes him sit staring blankly in front of him a while, before he takes up the next. He feels as though he were a very little boy, clinging to his mother with his head upon her lap. She writes as though she were stroking his hair. "How are you getting on? Are they good to you, and are you a good boy yourself?" She wonders whether he has forgotten her already; whether

anyone mends his clothes; if not, she would like to do it herself. Do Louise and he sleep in this room or in that one at night? He hasn't caught cold, has he, now that autumn has set in? "I wonder if you think a little of me, up here alone with father; life's not so easy for us now that we cannot have any news of our children. But if both you and I behave ourselves well, perhaps it will be different some day." She sends love from a gray horse called Musin.

He reads on. There are many, many letters. They stretch over many years. He sees himself grow in them. The tone in them changes to suit his age. The writing is the same as now—a young girl's hand that has not grown older since. He understands how she is always trying to keep her pain in the background, as if she were afraid of frightening him. Here is one that is nearly all about father. "To-day he is very poorly. He misses his children more than he will admit. It is a good thing that he has me at least. No one can imagine what he has gone through, but for the most part he bears it without a murmur. The worst thing of all for him is that the gulf between you two and us is so wide now that we cannot even call across to one another."

Here is one about his little sister's death. He can read a cry of anguish between its lines, the very handwriting speaks of her grief; but even here she tries to keep up a semblance of calm, so as not to frighten him. She says that their comfort must be that they still have Louise and Lorentz. True, they never hear a word of

them, but doubtless they must be alive, and to know even that is a great deal.

Then another. It is a winter evening and father is in bed; outside, the walls are cracking in the fearful cold. She has begun to knit ski-stockings and mittens for them both, though she knows she dare not send them. It is hard never to hear from one's children, but it is harder still never to be able to give them a little pleasure.

Lorentz hears the watch in his pocket ticking. He knows no longer whether it is early or late. He reads on.

Here is one written when he was ten years old. "Today is your birthday, Lo, and you must be a fine big boy now. Perhaps I would not know you if we met on the road. But last night I dreamed that you came in and sat on my lap and put your arms round my neck. Oh, Lorentz, think of it, after so many years! Fancy, you actually knew me again. Louise will soon be quite grown-up, I suppose; be good to her, dear. I wonder if I shall see the day when they will let us see some sign of life once more from you two? Or . . . or if you should both come here for just one little visit! But perhaps I could not bear that. I can't imagine what would happen to me if you both walked in and said, 'Mother —Father!' "

Here is one to congratulate him on his confirmation. Sad to say, she has no present she can send, and if she had she does not suppose it would do to send it.

Another congratulates him on passing his middle-school examination; and then one tells of a bad night, when she was afraid she was losing her wits. She hid herself in the barn and threw herself down and prayed and prayed; and her prayer seemed to become a little boat, that carried her away to Louise and to him. Since then it is as though she has built a little chapel where she meets them every evening before she shuts her eyes.

"—neither you nor Louise would know me again now. My hair has grown so white; I am so wrinkled and bent. But, thank God, your father still needs me. We have so many evils to bear—I thank God that you two are spared them. We parents have no right to drag our children down into our own misfortunes; may nothing but good come to you where you are now."

"Some day, dear Lorentz, you may perhaps see these letters. Writing them is like going out into the dark to call to you; but there is no answer, however long I listen."

One speaks sadly of a harvest that had failed, and of a winter that is never-ending. The days seem long enough, but the nights are longer. "Where are you, dear Louise and Lorentz? Can you hear me calling?"

In one she tells how father and she went out under the starry heavens on an autumn evening. He talked of light-years, distances, and magnitudes, till her head spun round. But without a word she picked out two of the most beautiful of the lights up there, and called one

Lorentz and the other Louise. Since then she often looks out of the window when it is growing dark, and waits for these two to be lit.

And lastly she speaks to him of death. She cannot believe but that there must be a life after this, and that she will be allowed either to sit and wait there till they two can follow her, or to be with them on this earth as a helpful power whenever they are in trouble. "Lorentz, Lorentz, may your life be happy!"

XIII

As he lies in bed that same night, his eyes turn toward the window; the blinds are down, but he can divine the moonlight outside in the glimmering spring night.

Great emotions often throw sudden light upon questions that have long perplexed one day by day. He sees his mother as a Pietà, with a grown-up man, her dead son, upon her lap. He puts the vision from him and another takes its place—one with which he has struggled day in, day out, one which he must either reshape or take as it is.

And there, in the middle of the room, stands a stranger. Lorentz lies quietly looking at him. It is only an illusion, of course. But the figure has a thin, full beard, long hair, a robe that falls to his bare feet, and his eyes are large and mild.

"You are fighting against me," says the stranger. "You would build up a Temple, where I am not to enter. You do not believe in me, and, even if you believed, you would not love me. You have not discovered yet that I am part of your own self. The one who always did the right thing when you yourself did wrong —I was he. You hate the doctrine of atonement. But your parents, too, have trodden the road to Golgotha and borne a cross, that you and your sister might be

saved. Millions of men have done the same of their own free will. I am the symbol of them all, their sacrifice exalted to the divine.

"What do you seek? Me you will never understand if you do not disentangle me both from the dogmas that men have built up in my name, and from time and place. I am not a person, but a power, old as humanity and young as you. Once I was but a festival-god, with roses on my brow and a lyre in my hand. Men did not call upon me when they agonized amid the terrors of death. But they needed a God like themselves, and at the same time possessed of a perfection mankind can never reach. He must hunger and thirst as they do, be persecuted as they are, die as they die, but must rise again to prepare the way for their own resurrection. He must do on their behalf the good which was beyond their own powers, and take upon himself their sins, so that they themselves might go on sinning—that is to say, go on living. The virgin who conceived me was the soul's own need.

"Who am I? I have as many forms as there are human minds. Everyone who brings me to life shapes me in the likeness of his longing. For the sick, I am healing; for the wrathful, I am the hammer; for the bridal pair, I am blessedness; for the dying, I am everlasting life. When the mother leaves her child, she prays me to stand by the cradle. When the castaway sits on the upturned keel, he implores me to come with a boat. To the struggling soul, I am truth which dies on the

cross, but rises again to eternal life. To him who fears the dark, I am the light he carries with him.

"It is true that the joy in teeming life has not yet given me a form. But this will soon be changed, now that men have found out that I am not only Jew, but also Greek—aye, that Plato himself is fulfilled in me. Is it my fault that men so often picture me on a cross? Remember, I was a willing guest at feasts. I danced at a wedding. There was somewhat in me of Dionysius. I, too, loved wine, lilies, and women.

"But remember that I am not strength only, but also weakness. My knowledge had narrow bounds. I was entangled in the superstition of my age. I sank beneath the cross on the way to the place of execution. At the end I lost even my faith. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! Were it not that men must feel compassion for me, they could not feel me to be their brother. Were it not that they feel they must save me, I could not be their savior.

"Do you ask who I am? I am as you will fashion me! I have fought as a revolutionist at the barricades, and preached in the slums; I have been the eternal discontent which has forced mankind ever to cry for more. The old gods lived apart from men in everlasting joy. I came into the world in a stable, I dwelt amongst harlots, and was crucified between thieves. I taught mankind that beneath the most turbid passions marvelous pearls may shine. Since then no misdoer has sunk so deep that he cannot see a ladder to heaven.

"What have you to set in my place? Joy in life? The universal soul? Power? Work? But I am all these, if so you will. And yet, if I were only these, what would become of the prisoners, the poor, the sick? Will you raise a Temple and shut the doors against them?

"Am I God's son? Did the drop not come from the ocean?"

Lorentz sits up in bed suddenly. "At last!" he says, half aloud. And a little later he whispers: "Mother!"

BOOK III

I

A WEDDING invitation! Louise was to marry Captain Rud.

This was something for the two old folk to talk over, both early and late. "Of course it would have been good to see her as a bride," says Peer. "But, but—there's my health."

"Perhaps it might do you good to have such an outing. We haven't shown ourselves outside the parish these last twenty years."

"And the expenses," he says irritably, beginning to fidget about the room.

"They can't be so very great. The few crowns it would cost, we really can afford now."

"I am not saying no definitely. We must think the thing over." And Merle knew him well enough not to press it further.

But as the days went on, he found more and more difficulties. They had not even clothes to appear in among such grand people.

"Oh, but my black silk dress is almost as good as new," said Merle.

"I see you've made up your mind to go. But my old dress-coat is in rags—the mice got at it years ago—and as for the gray frieze suit . . . hm! You must

remember it's not so far from Bruseth to Loreng."

"To Loreng?" She looked at him in surprise.

"Yes, we were big folk, too, when we lived there. And naturally, many of the people we knew there will be at the wedding."

"Well, wouldn't it be pleasant to see old acquaintances again?"

"No, not when one has come down to village smith and beggar."

"Oh, how can you talk like that?"

"Well, we look at it very differently, we two. The thing about you is that it's no use trying to drag you down. You remain a lady, one of the upper classes, whatever happens. But I have become the poor boy again. I have forgotten the ways of fine folk. And do you think that we should go and show ourselves in the middle of all that grandeur, so that people may pity us both—but especially you, whom I've dragged down into the mire? Oh no . . ."

She looked at this man, once a fisher lad, then a famous engineer, now a peasant again. His childhood's feelings toward "grand folk" had come back. It was touching. He who in her eyes knew more, had finer thoughts, and felt more deeply than almost anyone else.

"That wouldn't be a reason, Peer. But perhaps Louise has not come so close to us as . . . as Lorentz."

"Oh, you know quite well that we love the girl enough to want to go to her wedding. But to tell the truth—I should feel that the widow at Bruseth sat on every

chair in the rooms, glaring at us. And she may be as dead and buried as she likes, but if anyone said that we were the bride's father and mother, she would shriek out that it was a lie, that the girl was her daughter, and make everybody jump. Ugh! surely you know she would."

And so a letter had to be written to say—that they could not come.

And clearly Lorentz could not be there either. After passing his examination in the spring he had gone abroad. When last they heard from him he was in Rome.

On the wedding day they sent a telegram. And, strange to say, Peer turned out in his Sunday-best that day.

He had hardly gone out for a moment, when he came back and sat down again and gazed before him.

"It must soon be time for them to go to the church," he said.

"Yes, it must be." She sighed, and her hands worked nervously at something she was sewing.

"If one could only have stood apart, so that nobody saw one, and had a look at the bride for a bit. Well I remember the day when your father led you up the church aisle and the organ burst out. Good God, what a moment! And you may take your oath that Louise is worth looking at to-day."

Merle bent her head and sewed on.

After a while he said: "Yes, you are right. That we

are living here as we are—that we could not bring up our children ourselves, that we are not at the wedding to-day—it is all my fault."

"Oh, Peer, you know that's not true."

He came over to her and stroked her hair. "We must keep the wedding day as best we can by ourselves, we two."

She made cream porridge, the dish for great occasions in the country. And in the evening both sat in their best clothes and tried to keep festival by talking of "the children"—of the time when the children were little, and they were all together.

II

Dear Parents:

My last letter, the one from Rome, was scribbled in a hurry; a budding pastor shouldn't spend so much time racketing about with artists. But what impressed me most both in Germany and elsewhere were the cathedrals. They affected me like sacred books which carried on the development of Christianity after the work of its verbal doctrine was finished. Oh, these prayers that mount up in vaulting and arches, these organ peals in color, these hymns in stone, how do they not give scope to our inmost longing to breathe free breath! In the Gothic cathedrals I have the feeling that the traditional Christ is only admitted there for a time; that the life-hunger bursts the gospels' narrow swathings, strikes upward in an eruption of youth and glowing life toward heaven, and storms, with exultant harmonies and intertwinings, into the infinite spaces. But the crucifix hangs there all the same. For even the most daring aspiration cannot shoot a bolt so high but that it must needs return to earth; and here below is suffering, death, and God. Is this so? I know not.

After that I went by Brindisi to Hellas, and, like Renan, I sent up from the Parthenon a prayer to Pallas Athene. I remembered that Paul, when he came there, raged against the statues of a Phidias, a Praxiteles, a Scopas. The religion of sin and redemption clashed with the Greek love of beauty and faith in the divine. I thought to myself: bear with those who wrote our holy books, for the day will come when others will have to bear with us.

And now I have traveled a little among the southern French towns, whose cathedrals, you know, are famous. And here I have

felt yet more strongly the impression that it is the landscape that has given birth to the Gothic temple. It is the daughter of the plains, the forests, the vineyards. It uplifts their hymn to the stars and the sun. It is the yearning of the earth toward heaven. It is as though these arches and vaultings sought to picture, in miniature, infinite space, so that men might not grow dizzy with gazing up into the immeasurable. And as the cathedral is a microscopic reproduction of earth and heaven, the like, it seems to me, is the relation of the various creeds to God. Oh, spirit of man, spirit of earth, which is never tired of striving toward the light above! Is not that spirit in itself divine, which has achieved the singing of these eternal hymns in stone? This dream of millions, that, beyond life and death, all shall one day be united in the highest perfection, is not this alone enough to make us long to cry: I will take part with you!

I suppose you are wondering, Father, what exactly I do believe and think. The question does not exist for me. I think that he who believes after the fashion of the orthodox theologians is wanting in breadth of vision, and that he who doubts is still narrower in his view. For me it is no longer a question of any particular religion, but of an entering into the spirit of something far greater.

The New Temple? you ask. Yes, dear Father, that is where the difficulty comes in. I have imagined it and dreamed of it, and in my thoughts have worked at the building of it. But as often as I try to complete it, it only grows larger and larger and moves further and further away. Perhaps this may be because all religions are moving toward it, and some day we all shall meet there. Therefore for me Christianity, too, becomes part of the never-ending evolution of the idea of God.

Now I come home, and on the wharf reality stands waiting for me with the fateful election: to be or not to be a priest in the State Church? It is the last thing I could have imagined myself; but I am beginning to understand what a power reli-

gious tradition is. In it the most precious possessions of a people's soul are passed on from generation to generation. The priest is not only a preacher of the word—he is also a guardian of the holy vessels of his people's faith. It may be the church door is so low that I may have to bend in entering, but I can stand erect again afterward.

So I am coming northward, rich in impressions, but still somewhat undecided. Be forbearing with me when I come; it is such happiness to me that I have a mother and a father.

After she has finished reading, Merle waits a while without daring to raise her eyes to Peer. He too is doubtless thinking many thoughts as he sits there.

At length he gets up. "This is what I have been afraid of all along."

"What is?" Now at last she looks up.

"Don't you see that the boy is turning his back on the whole thing? All that I had hoped for so eagerly—you'll see: he is turning his back on it all."

And he raised himself on his stiff legs, stood a moment looking down, and then stumped slowly out.

III

Lorentz walked slowly out toward the old town that warm day of early summer, in a light suit and straw hat; now and again he stopped and leaned on his brown, silver-handled walking-stick. When he was come near the bishop's palace he stood still for a while under a spreading tree and smoked a cigarette.

At the same time the bishop, gray-whiskered and in steel-rimmed spectacles, is walking to and fro in his big well-lighted study. There is a sound of ticking from a varied assortment of old-fashioned clocks on the walls, from many more in the next room, and from the rooms above. This bishop, who has been fisherman, teacher, priest, professor, secretary of state for ecclesiastical affairs, and who is now primate, is a collector too, of dialects, old jingles, books of sorcery, legends, and peasant-made clocks from every district in the country.

"Come in!" he says stopping in his walk.

He shifted his spectacles, and looked at the young man who was standing in the doorway. He was a little too well-dressed, too self-assured, too erect, with too much confidence in his look. The old prelate had his own way of receiving candidates—he liked to play the fatherly adviser. But here he didn't feel sure that a pat on the shoulder would be quite suitable.

He held out both his bony hands. "Welcome, Herr Alme. Yes, I have received your very interesting letter. But come over here . . ." and he led him to a writing-table and made him sit down. Then he himself took his seat in his writing-chair, leaned back and looked benevolently at the other.

"Yes, I have read your letter," he began. "You are . . . you are a young man in search of the truth."

The young candidate for the priesthood made a little grimace. He thought the expression banal. "The position is," he began, "that I have just come home and am disengaged; and I wanted to know if you, Bishop, consider that the State Church is the right place for me."

"You have been traveling for purposes of study, I understand. In Rome—ah, I have interesting recollections of the year I was there collecting materials for my doctor's thesis. The papal library . . ." He nodded toward the window.

"I don't know whether I can say I have been studying. But I brought many impressions away with me."

"I am pleased to be able to have a talk with you in peace and quiet. Do you smoke?" He got up and fetched a box of cigars, but the other shook his head with a smile.

"You are not addicted to that vice?"

"Oh yes, a pipe now and then."

"My dear fellow, if you have your pipe with you, do bring it out. Then you will not object to my lighting

my favorite pipe. Or would you like to borrow one perhaps?" He looked over to the smoking table by the wall. Above it hung a row of old pipes with meerschaum bowls and long stems.

Again the young man smiled and shook his head.

"Very well, then we must take a turn by ourselves, we two," says the bishop to the largest and oldest of the pipes, as he fills it. When he had lighted it, he sank again into the high-backed chair by the writing table, leaned back comfortably and looked at his companion.

"Now, let me tell you one thing, my young friend. You have a mission. We live in a distracted time. In many places the churches are standing empty, and within our own body there is quarreling and intolerance, so that young people are frightened away. You are perhaps the man we have been waiting for. You are, without doubt, a force, and our church needs you sorely."

"You said, Bishop, that you had read my letter."

"To say 'read' is too little. I have studied it. I see that you have not only knowledge, but also feeling; not only a capacity for reasoning, but also imagination and passion." He puffed at his pipe. "All of them great and important gifts for a preacher of the Gospel. But then comes the question of orthodoxy. Do you think you are the first that has gone through crises of ferment and perplexity? All that will come right in

time. Look upon me as a fatherly friend; aye, as an affectionate father, if you will; and come to me with all confidence, if you find things difficult."

The young man looked hard at the bishop, and his bushy eyebrows drew down a little.

"It is not so simple as all that, Bishop. I suppose I may speak freely. It is for that that I have come. . . ."

"Speak out, my friend. You are not the first young candidate who has sought me out. Above all things we must be honest."

Lorentz Alme pressed his hands against his knee, and threw back his head—his eyes began to shine.

"I have come to see that it is one thing to have one's own views, and quite another to put them to the test in stern reality. It is for that reason that I have come to you, Bishop. You have greater experience than most people."

The bishop looked toward the window and nodded. The young man went on: "First and foremost, it seems to me that religion is a thousand things at once. We must be glad if we can get hold of even a fragment of it."

"Admitted." The bishop nodded at the window and smoked slowly. "It happens sometimes that a pastor cannot make use of a fraction of the things he feels and sees. And yet they form reservoirs to draw upon, so that he is never in danger of drying up. But now, about what we call Christianity?"

"It must be regenerated. It must be given a new symbolism. The old myths and dogmas must go. First of all, the Augsburg Confession."

The bishop smiled and threw him a side-glance: "I am not unwilling to admit that. Have you, by chance, composed a new one, and have you got it with you?"

Lorentz was taken aback. Was the bishop making fun of him? He looked at this self-possessed potentate, this mixture of fisherman, public-school teacher, priest, university lecturer, politician, and prince of the church. His fingers are yellow with tobacco, his mouth suggests that he chews it, his vanity is well-known, his greed for decorations is comic. Can it be that he is an impostor? And yet there is an air of authority and power about this man, just because of all he must have seen and gone through in his long life.

"I have no new one, Bishop. But if the higher clergy were to take the matter up in concert, it would be easy enough to get rid of the old one. That would create confidence. No one can believe in it any longer. As an official creed it is an insult to both priest and congregation."

The bishop nodded at the window again.

"You believe in a God?"

"No one can exist in contact with the All without giving it a name."

"Christ?"

"The moral universe in human form."

"Sin?"

"I should call that the friction between our aspirations and our limitations."

The bishop shut his eyes, and nodded at the window each time the young man answered a question.

"Prayer?"

"The collecting of our spirit, face to face with the eternal."

The bishop nodded.

"The sacraments?"

"The most beautiful, the most wonderful symbol of man's power, through his aspirations, to become one with the divine."

The bishop nodded. But now he opened his eyes. He took a pull at his pipe, which had gone out, and laid it on the table. The air began to grow tense with expectation. But Lorentz had determined to say all he had to say.

"See here, my young friend—let us begin at the beginning: how did you come to enter—shall we say, a religious atmosphere?"

"It was through the landscape it came about."

The bishop did not move on his seat. But there was a swift raising of his eyelids as he looked at the other.

"Through the land—scape?'

"It was so great and fruitful. I grew up on a manor that lay high and free. We looked out over a whole world. It was so rich and manifold. It was the grandest book that I have ever read in. It told both of life and death—it was both fantasy and reality. For me it grew

to be a spiritual power which I have drawn upon ever since. It lies forever in the depths of my consciousness, and it swells heavenward like an organ peal—pealing for me the harmonies of eternity. It had to find a vent some day, and so . . . so I entered on the path which has brought me here."

"Would you make the love of nature the supreme spiritual force in the church of Christ?"

"It can be transfigured. The mighty life spirit that stretches brooding over time and space is in itself religion."

"And on this basis you would become a priest?" The bishop had closed his eyes again and turned his face to the window.

"Yes. For me, to be a priest is to inspire men to live nobly, developing to the full their powers and faculties, in the consciousness that all they do is done in the presence of God. For me, it is ever to remind them that the good they think, feel, or do, is not lost, but is transmuted into God. For me, to be a priest is to teach men to hear the chiming over their daily lives of the great, the marvelous bell of eternity. To be a priest is to teach the young to believe with all their hearts that God, too, is young. It is to take the little child, baptize it and cradle it in God's own springtime. To be a priest is to stand before the altar and welcome mankind, hungering after the divine, lift it up to God, and say in his name: 'Go thy way, thy sins are forgiven thee.'

"Yes, Bishop, priesthood is manifold. We feel the

golden floods within our souls; they come from the eternal ocean and they flow back to it again. To be a priest is ever and always to instil into mankind the feeling that its life is holy.

"Now, I believe, I have no more to say. I came here to lay my cards on the table. And I think I know your answer. You have no use for me.

"I did not grow up, like Brand, under the shadow of a barren fell. I believe the broad and teeming landscape that encompassed my childhood has formed my faith. But I can imagine, Bishop, that in the church as it is there is no place for me."

For some time the bishop had sat with his head thrown back, looking at this young man who spoke from such an ecstasy. Truly, there was the stuff for a prelate in him.

"Listen," he began. "In your place I would ask myself a question: do I wish to become a priest for my own sake, for God's sake, or for the sake of mankind?"

The candidate thrust out his chin a little, lifted his head and looked at the other, but made no reply.

The bishop went on in a louder voice, and Lorentz felt as if the old man grew in stature where he sat and took on new strength.

"If it is for the sake of mankind, then it is also for the sake of God. But that would not necessarily mean that it is for your own sake. You have driven up the hill in a motor-car. You are far ahead of the others, who have to climb on foot, dragging a heavy load of

inherited tradition, which, in their sight, is precious. You cry to them: hurry on up here! But it would be better if you helped them to drag their load. To help them you must go down and take your place among them in the team.

"Listen, young man: go out among men and learn Christianity. Though you study and think till doomsday, you will never learn it by that alone. You have worked out a conception of your own. And it is so much twittering on the housetop. Go out among the common people and learn from them. You don't believe in the devil. You will find him there. You do not believe in Christ as a living person. You will meet him there. Have you sat on the keel of an upturned boat when sea and sky were spray and spume, and when the fishermen forced Jesus to come walking over the waves to rescue them? I have. Have you sat beside a murderer the night before his execution? I have. Have you, on a Christmas Eve, stood in a poor hovel where all is hunger, rags, dirt, and misery, and where, in spite of all, when the hymn about the child in the manger and the shepherds in the fields was sung, the low roof became the starry heaven and the earthen floor the Holy Land? I have. That was my home. Do you know our country folk? You spoke of a teeming landscape. But we have snow-storms that slay, fogs that lure men over precipices, nights so light that people go mad, mountains that cast such shadows that men's minds turn sick with fear. One night an ava-

lanche sweeps away the whole village; another time the finger of God turns it aside and it spares the houses. This is where faith is bred. But the forests still hold their goblins, the White Christ still contends with monsters in the minds of the people. Go forth and help him. If you read our fathers' confession in church, it is to keep the kinship with them alive. What would we be without them? You say in your letter that you will choose the psalms that suit you. You say that you will choose texts from outside the Bible, because people grow tired of going to church when they are taken forever to Judea to find God. I agree. But remember that what is important is not the text, but the sermon. It is not the oil, but the flame, that gives the light.

"Young man, I thank you for coming hither. You have much knowledge, fire, culture, good will. Excellent. But you are wanting in one thing: humility. Bow yourself, and you will grow greater. The church opens its arms to you. But you must come as a servant, not as a master. The road to mankind's Holy of Holies is through reverence. You will understand some day that it is not only the present, but the past also, that lays duties on us."

At that moment the clocks on the walls began to strike, both in this room and in the next; not all at the same time, but one after another, till all were striking, and those in the room above as well. There were the heavy thumps of large clocks in cases reaching from

floor to ceiling, and the strokes of smaller clocks whose pendulums swung uncovered to and fro; soft strokes, deep strokes, all manner of strokes—it was twelve o'clock. Last of all, from the upper regions of the house, came a slender chime that had got behind the others and struck a few eager strokes all alone.

The bishop had sat as though listening to them. In the young man's eyes he had grown huge as a troll, a giant enveloped in cloud. All the chimes of all the clocks sounded like the call of the people from far and near, from fiords and valleys over the whole wide land.

And now he rose, came over to the young man and laid his hands on his shoulders: "Take an old man's blessing. You will meet with struggle and contention, both in yourself and with others. But you will meet also with something greater—with God."

A little later the young man was walking down the street again in the warm summer weather, but this time he walked still more slowly than when he came.

IV

The letter told them that Lorentz had taken a living out on the seacoast. Peer's face turned gray, and when Merle had to get up at last, she did not dare to speak to him.

And for the next few days not a word did the old man say. On the way up to the smithy he would stop and stand staring down at his feet. At table he would forget to eat. He went out of the house without an idea where he wanted to go.

"He might just as well have taken a trip up here," said Merle, in order to set him going—though she looked at the matter with different eyes from his.

"It's clear enough that he's ashamed of himself! Well, well! There's nothing more to be said about it."

He seemed to her to grow older after that day. He walked with such heavy steps. In the years when the boy was studying there had been a new, bright ring in his spirit. He, too, as it were, was taking part in the new work. And now—now there was nothing more to be said about it.

Out in the fields he would sit down on the edge of a ditch, and stay there with no heart to get up again. The day comes when you really do grow tired.

He sits there looking at sky and mountain. For

long he has been nothing but a wreck, and yet he has had a dream: his son as the regenerator of religion. A religion cleansed of the barbarous traditions of the East, which to-day degrade mankind. "There is no God except as he exists in the mind of man, but neither is there any misfortune so great that you cannot conquer it by calling on the eternal forces within yourself. It is you, Oh man, who gives existence a meaning and a goal; you have created what there is of great and beautiful upon earth; aye, you have warmed the cold universe with your faith in an all-loving God. Lift up your head and show yourself conscious of your greatness. You shall have your holy Temple with hymns and priesthood. Lorentz shall build it." He himself would live to see it, and his life would at last seem to have been worth while—it would be as though his soul had been saved, caught up into something that would never die.

And now the boy has grown tired. Now he is falling asleep on the broad bed of the State Church. That's the way things go. And now you, Peer, are tired too. Now you can strive no more.

In spite of himself he grew cross-grained and peevish. He could not bear contradiction from Merle. He had moments that frightened himself. He thought her odious. She dared to defend the boy. He was alone. He stormed and swore on the least provocation.

He went to the store one day with knapsack and

stick. But when he had got far down the road he stopped and began to think. He had forgotten his errand. Back he came again, and then set out once more. The sky was overcast already, and now it began to rain. Why had she not sent him off earlier in the day? In his head the thought gnawed and hammered ceaselessly: the whole thing has been a failure, Peer. It is all an illusion to think that one can store up a spiritual surplus and hand it on to the next generation. It is superstitious illusion. So overwhelming is life that you are no more than a leaf that withers and crumbles into mold—and next spring the forests are as green as ever. You have your life, and your children theirs. Cut the navel string. Your music of eternity was only a tune that you hummed to yourself—no one gave ear to it. Such is life.

It rained. He tramped on. A motor-car full of joyous townfolk in waterproofs rushed past him; they saw this white-bearded peasant in the worst of the deluge sitting on a stone by the roadside deep in thought; the rain came down in torrents and he paid no heed to it.

At last he got up and discovered that he was soaking wet. When he got near the store he stopped short. He had forgotten what he wanted again. He must go back and find out what it was.

This time Merle laughed at him and suggested that he should change before he set out again. But no

sooner had he been told for the third time what he was to do, than he set off just as he was. Merle stood at the window and watched him. He seemed to have grown smaller than he used to be, but his movements were as eager as ever.

V

On a hot day of summer, when Merle and Peer were down in the field making hay, they received an unexpected visit. They heard someone calling out: "Good-day!" And Louise and her husband came toward them across the grass. The two old folks leaned on their rakes and looked down at their clothes. Merle had her skirt turned up and a kerchief drawn down over her forehead; Peer was bareheaded and in his shirt-sleeves. "Sorry to come when you're busy," said Louise, "but I had to show you my husband: here he is!" The young couple were in light gray clothes, and the captain waved his white cap like an old acquaintance—but he bowed low when he shook hands with the old couple.

Merle and Peer looked at their daughter, as she fastened up the blue traveling-veil over her hat, showing a ruddy shining face. She looked handsome and blooming, and in her eyes, her voice, and her laughter there seemed to be a new note of harmony. There she stood gazing at them, and at the valley and the mountains and the summer itself, seeming to take possession of the whole scene, because it was so glorious. And at her side was this well set-up man, with clean-shaven face, and gray eyes where there lurked more than a

touch of humor. His movements were quiet, his hand firm, almost hard to the touch. "It is beautiful here," he said, looking about him. Louise noticed that when he looked at her mother his eyes had an unwonted light in them, and when he spoke to her father he took especial care to be respectful. But in her father's face, every time he said anything to his son-in-law, she read the question, "I wonder what you are really thinking of me?" Poor Father!

"We have come to take you along on a motor ride," says Louise. The old people look at the hay, lying spread about on the field, and say it won't do for them to leave it. "Are you done with the harvest at Bruseth already?" Peer asks his daughter. "Yes, long ago. It's soon got through when one has a stirring farm hand." And Louise looks at her husband through half-closed eyes. "Yes, to be sure, a captain can make things move," smiles Merle. "Oh yes, when the colonel looks after him well," nods the captain, with the most serious of faces. The young people exchange glances. Merle has to laugh. Peer coughs.

"Won't you come in and have some coffee?" Merle knew she had nothing else to offer them. "Louise must decide," says the captain. "Oh, indeed, is it she who decides everything?" "Always." "At any rate when we're of the same mind," adds Louise. "Otherwise he generally does."

Then the captain proposed that his father- and mother-in-law should go in and get ready for the ride,

and leave Louise and him to rake the hay together. "Yes, that's a good idea, Mother. Do you hear, Father!" The old folk made objections, but next moment the captain had thrown off hat and coat and found something to serve as a rake, and was hard at work. Louise pulled her jacket off and seized upon her father's rake. "Now, no nonsense," she said to her parents.

And the captain was the man to handle a rake! He got a load of hay raked together and piled into the hand-barrow in no time, then caught sight of a rope lying on the sward, and set to work at once tying the hay down ready to carry. "Are you still there?" said Louise. "Didn't you hear what we said? We'll have this all done before you can turn round." Then she too laid her hat on the ground and went on making play with her rake.

A couple of hours later they were going down, with the old people in their Sunday best, to the farm where the car had been left. A splendid machine it was, bright and shining. As an old mechanic, Peer was bound to walk about and about it, kneel down and peer under it, open the bonnet and try to find out how it was all put together. They drove down slowly as far as the highroad, then put on speed, and the farms and trees flew past. The gray-green river in the valley-bottom, the hillsides with their houses, the fields and the new-mown meadows, all went quickly by. "Now we're grandees and no mistake," said Peer, clinging on to his

hat to prevent its flying away. "But where are we going? I must be home to supper, you know."

In the early afternoon they stopped at a tourist hotel, all balconies and windows looking out over the valley. Here they sat down to dinner, with wine—actually with champagne. "As we couldn't get you to our wedding," said Louise, drinking her parents' health.

They had a little table to themselves by the window, and in the big dining-room there was a buzz of many voices and many languages. It couldn't be denied that her parents looked out of place in this scene —it was long, to be sure, since they had been in such surroundings. And all the time she was noticing her husband. Would he rise to the occasion? Yes, he really showed great tact, especially with her mother. But he should not have asked her father whether he had any new inventions on hand. He put his foot in it there. Poor Captain Rud. He felt the little side-glances she gave him. Sometimes they showed displeasure, sometimes they were approving, even radiant. But always he was being weighed and measured.

Peer was flushed with the wine. His inflamed eyes began to sparkle behind their glasses. His tongue was loosened. He began to speak of olden days, at home and abroad. Of life in the tropics, where he had been an engineer once upon a time.

"Yes, you built a railway for the king of Abyssinia, didn't you?" said Captain Rud, much interested.

Peer looked out of the window, as though gazing at far-off times. "Oh yes—yes, perhaps I did." But then he turned the talk, beginning to ask the captain about military conditions at home in recent years.

"Have you heard from Lorentz lately?" asked Louise. She had no idea that this was a sore subject. "Hasn't he taken a living now somewhere in the West?"

"Hm!" There was a pause, and her parents looked down. "It's not easy to make the fellow out," murmured Peer. "No, that's perfectly true," agreed Louise.

"But now I will come to Bruseth soon," he said all at once, pledging the two young people. "If you ask me once more, look out for yourselves, for I should be quite capable of turning up and bringing my lady with me. There's no sense in my having such a grand lady for a daughter, and not having a notion how she lives."

"You'll be very welcome!" said the captain with enthusiasm.

Louise had not meant to invite her parents again this time. They had refused often enough. Lorentz was first with them now as always, no doubt.

After this the four sitting there seem to find nothing more to say. But as they are getting up, Peer says thoughtfully, looking at Louise: "You really are like your mother after all." And he seemed to be looking back over great distances at Merle's youth. "So you think that, do you, Father? And you, Jörgen?" she

turned to the captain. "Whom do *you* think I am like?" She seemed quite greedy for his answer.

"I have my own opinion about that, but I won't say what it is till to-morrow . . ." "It's just as well to have something to look forward to." "Yes, I fancy it's the only thing you have to look forward to from me." "Indeed? And what about some return for boxing your ears that time you rode Lady too hard?" The captain seemed quite unruffled; he merely beckoned to the waiter and asked for the bill. "Did you box his ears?" It was Merle who asked, not knowing whether it was a joke or not. "Oh, we still play at being children," said the captain with a smile. Louise looked at him as though she were ripe for a tussle. "Oh, just you wait," she laughed, "it may turn to earnest some day."

In the bright summer evening, the car flew down the valley again. The young folks went with Peer and Merle up to the little cottage, but wouldn't stay for any refreshment. They wanted to get home that night.

"Good-by then," Louise calls out once more from the bottom of the hill, waving to the two standing in front of the hut.

Merle and Peer went slowly in. It had been a change from the monotonous flow of their life on the little farm. And Merle thought with relief: "This has really brightened him up."

VI

Dear Mother:

Your last letters have roused a suspicion: has Father no part any more in what you write to me? Does he look upon me as quite lost? Console him by telling him that his son is not in the least a pietist, yet. Yesterday evening there was a dance here in a warehouse down by the sea, and the place was full of wild boys and girls. In drops the pastor and all is quiet. They thought he had come to throw cold water on the fun, and, behold! it was only to have a fling himself. If they had not stared before, they did then. Of course there are plenty of gloomy precisians here, thinking to litigate their way into heaven Bible in hand, and I hear they are lying in wait already for a pretext to complain about me to both dean and bishop. I am revenging myself in the meantime with a lecture about the history of the dance—of course, it would hardly do to bring in the Greeks, but there is plenty both of wine and dancing in the Holy Scriptures. I have delivered a couple of lectures on the history of religion, for I think it high time that people should be given some unvarnished information on such subjects; and the little play I got up at the young people's club was quite a success; so that now most people are only asking for more.

But while I am teaching other folks a few things, they are teaching me much more in return. A musician must know his instrument if he is to play it well, and the same is true of a priest. As I'm country-bred, it is no doubt easier for me than for most people to go into a little cottage and be sociable with old and young, and of course I have to consume a lot

of coffee and tobacco with them, and a dram now and then; but it all helps to get them to open their budget. Legends, fairy-tales, omens, ghosts, wraiths, great and momentous happenings—such things give an insight into the mind of a race, and a wisdom beyond what any exegesis has yet compassed.

The gray skies above the bitter gray ocean, the gray rocks, the gray houses, all these must naturally produce a multitude of gray minds and a gray religion. But there is the grandeur of ocean and storm in it all. When people have to die, it is the fear of hell that makes them send to fetch the pastor. Men feel themselves like lost souls clinging to a boat's keel and crying for help. Somewhere among the rolling black clouds is God. The hymns they sing are like the screaming of sea-birds in a gale.

And, by the way, I am beginning to be a thorough sea-dog. You should see the fishing fleet standing out to sea in the gray dawn, and spreading, out beyond the skerries, like a swarm of dark dots over the heaving plain. I have been out and helped to draw the nets. Last night I had to go out in an egg-shell of a motor-boat through driving scud and rain on a sick-visit to a gray cottage on a gray holm, where a girl lay dying of consumption. I was in full oilskin kit, but it wasn't long before I had not a dry stitch on my body—well, it freshens one up; I thrive here. As for the inn where they have quartered me, it's a plank building that the wind blows right through, so that I have to lie at night in my fur jacket, with my cap pulled down over my ears. By the time I am archbishop I shall have plenty of rheumatism to keep me going. The girl on the holm had something to confess that I daresay is not so very rare; when she was in service at Stavanger she had made away with her baby, and the thing had never come out. I can still see her great, terrified eyes, when she had got her mother and father out of the room, and we were left alone. It is

always the same question: "Does the pastor think there is mercy for me?"

And there sit I, once so bitter against the religion of sin, and have to answer for the Supreme Judge. Outside rage sea and storm. For her it is the Judgment Day. But once upon a time a young man sat by the wayside and said to a guilty woman: Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more.

It is strange to come straight from conceptions of religion patched together in a student's den, out into the bitter reality. Yesterday I stood by the grave of five fishermen who were drowned in the last gale, and threw earth upon their coffins. Their relations stood round about; the little boys had taken off their caps; the youngest widow was barely twenty. I have not become hardened yet, and my voice shook when I said: From earth art thou come, to earth shalt thou return, and from the earth shalt thou rise again. It was the only comfort I could give. But at the same time my heart cried out: If this is deception—if there is none to hear the prayers of widows and mothers, if death is a vanishing forever, then, and then most of all, the human beings who believe are infinitely dear to me. I would fain to join hands with them and say: Let me share in your error—take me with you as your brother! If God is neither in the storm, in the calm, nor among the stars, with all the more assurance should we worship Him, for thereby we show that at least He is in our own hearts.

But, dear Mother, for me the greatest thing of all is the Lord's Supper. Here, to the little wind-swept church, come weather-beaten men and women, twisted and bent with toil; and I have learned what a wonderful cleansing the souls—of most—have undergone before they venture up to the altar. How ludicrous become Luther and Calvin, and all disputes about the bread and the wine, at this moment! These men and women stand there, in very truth, before the face of God.

And it is granted to me to speak those beautiful words

in His name. There can be no greater moment for a mortal.

Mother, do you know what I often think? That I have not really found you yet. No, not quite. Those lost years of childhood must have left a wide gap which it is hard to bridge. But perhaps some day . . . no, I dare not hope so much. I am not sure that I am man enough to stand the test of such a meeting.

Dear Father, you have helped me more than you think; and I have not forgotten our talks those times I was with you. But I had to take the decisive steps for myself. And after all, are we so much at odds? I believe you will admit that, in face of the eternal, we are all children, and need each his a-b-c and picture book to help us grasp it, and that you and I have ours, and Oline on the holm has hers, and that, seen from the stars, they are all perhaps about equally good. You, like me, were opposed to the idea of atonement in its old forms. But translated into our present-day idiom, it means: We set perfection itself at so immeasurable a height that we need a divine man to raise us up to it. And yet this intermediary is so close at hand that he may be conceived and developed in each man's soul. Is this so barbarous? I know no religion that has a loftier, a more glorious aim.

But is this the conclusion of the matter? No, we are constantly regenerating our ideals, or regeneration is going on in us. The national god of a highly self-conscious people became one day the God of all nations; to-day he stands for the full-toned harmonies of the universe itself. He was the god of law, the god of dreams, the god of punishment, the god of revenge. Then there came a young man who called him love. This young man has become a spiritual power that ceaselessly conquers ever new spheres. In his worship we have as yet little place for grace and beauty of form, for hymns to the young, teeming life of the earth. But it will come. Who knows whether humor itself will not one day find a place in his Temple.

I have no great experience, but I have seen how much easier it is for a hearty laugh to clear the air, than for a bitter homily.

Dear Father, how beautiful was our dream of the New Temple. We planned, I think, that it should enshrine a perfect and complete conception of the divine. But, in the first place, surely preparation must be made in the human soul, and secondly, I have the impression that the whole world of to-day is hard at work building on it. I only hope that it may never be finished; for if ever the roof is put on and the spire erected, it will mean that the soul of man has set a limit to its aspiration, it will mean that the Temple is finished, but that God is dead.

Bear with me. Often enough I have struggles with myself to go through. It is my comfort that I can give ear to the great organ whose music peals out through all that lives, and in it I find, too, those that are near and dear to me.

After a moment Merle looked up. But Peer sat on staring vacantly at the floor. It is strange how loud a clock on the wall can tick when there is silence in a house.

"You ask what I think of this?" he said at last, without looking up.

Merle smiled. "Did I?"

"Of course, you agree with him in this, too. You two have always been in league on the sly."

And he got up, straightened himself stiffly with his hand to his back, and hobbled out.

But on the way up to the smithy he stopped and stared at the roof, then all at once turned sharply and

came back again. "You had better read that over again," he said.

Later in the day she heard him going about humming. Well! She drew a long breath. This winter had been a very long one for them both.

A little on in the spring a letter came from Louise begging them to come to a christening. "Father, you must really put in an appearance this time, to be godfather to your first grandchild. The little girl is so like her grandmother that you'll dote upon her. And this time Lorentz is going to be a good boy and come too, so perhaps we may hear him preach in church the day he baptizes little Merle."

And now Peer was a brand-new man. "So you're a grandmother, my girl. Well, well, well!" He really couldn't help going over to stroke his wife's hair.

"And are you not a grandfather, I'd like to know?"

"How should a man ever know? It's you she is like."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

But what a joy to see him bustling about in such good spirits. The letter from Lorentz had cleared most of the sky. But the grandchild brought out the sun.

"What is it you're sitting there laughing at?" she asked while they were at supper.

"Am I laughing? Well, surely even I can't always be crying."

"You're laughing at me again, I suppose."

"I'm afraid of it. If we should go to Bruseth, it'll be a rare sight to see you as grandmother. Good

heavens, what a bustle you'll be in, putting everything to rights!"

"That means you're going with me, doesn't it?" And she held out her hand.

VII

Spring was in full march over the country-side; the lake was free of ice, from the green hillsides there was the neighing of horses at work in the fields, and, in the soft belts of leaf-wood between the farms, the cuckoo shouted.

Captain Rud came over the ridge and downward with rucksack and staff. He had been going round for some days among the timber-rafts, and was expecting Louise to come out and meet him. Some little distance above the manor he stopped, leaned on his stick, and looked out over the lake and the country-side, watching a light spring out here and there in the gathering dusk. Behind him a black-cock began to drum, and the tinkle of becks sang out that the snows on the hills were in full thaw. Oh, well! as Louise had not come, no doubt she must have been kept looking after the child.

And here he stands, an officer in an army that no one takes seriously any longer, and, for the rest, an employee of his wife's, who is a rich woman in her own right. Is this such a bad fate? No, it's a fine thing to serve a beautiful woman; he would not begrudge her the whole wide world—but sometimes he asks himself how much she could find it in her heart to let *him* have.

It is true she says to her people: "Ask the Captain!" But she knows well enough that, behind the scenes, it is he that has to ask her. Who knows whether she does not look down on him a little because it is so? She has just let herself be nominated by the Conservatives for the communal election, although she knew that he was a candidate for the Peasants' Party. The two are to appear publicly now in opposition to each other—perhaps she thinks this amusing, but he does not.

But that is not the worst of it. When, he wonders, is he going to get a grip on her, so that both feel they are all in all to one another, they two, and that there is no one else in the world? This feeling about her brother is growing to be a mania. It is as though she were forever going about searching for him. It is true she has a husband, but he is only good enough for her to spar with; her tenderest thoughts seem to wander in darkness crying and calling upon her brother. Will the little child bring any change in this?

By the time he gets near the manor the electric light above the houses has been turned on. He stands for a moment looking at the white-glowing globes against the red of the evening sky. Then he goes in by way of the kitchen, that he may take off his muddy boots; and up to the bathroom for a shower-bath and a change.

When he came into the bedroom, he found her sitting by the white-enameled cot, bending over a little,

whimpering creature with a bare, bald head. The nurse stood near by, ready to take the little one; but now the young mother turned her head toward the door, and her face lit up when she saw him. "Oh, here's father!" she said to the child. "Yes, I really did mean to go and meet you, Jörgen; but this child here has been so naughty."

"There's nothing the matter, is there?" He came and bent over them both, laying his hand on her shoulder.

"No, only a little stomach-ache, I expect." She gave the child to the nurse, and got up to smooth her hair before the glass. "And how have you been getting on, my dear?"

"Oh, there's been plenty of snow and water to wade about in."

"Then I suppose you've been going about wet all day long?"

"That's all in the day's work, you know."

"There's great news here, I can tell you." She turned toward him beaming.

"Anything to do with me?" He raised his eyebrows.

"Oh, don't you be too curious." She turned to the girl: "You must let me know if she begins again." Then she drew him with her out into the passage, and threw her arms about his neck.

"Have you thought the least little bit about your wife?"

"Not a bit." He kissed her eyes. "And you've not given me a thought either, I expect?"

"Not a single one." She looked him in the face, smiling. Then she led him by the hand toward the staircase. "You're not at all excited, I suppose?"

"Don't you see that I'm out of breath with excitement? What is it now?"

She stood still and laid her hands on his shoulders. They looked at one another. "Well, then?" he asked.

"Lorentz is coming at Whitsuntide. It will be he, after all, that will christen Merle. Do you hear that?" And she shook him.

"Splendid, Louise!"

"Do you mean that in earnest?"

"Would you rather I meant it in jest?"

"Oh!" She shut her eyes, caught hold of his hands, and squeezed them. "Lorentz is coming—at last! You can't imagine . . . !" And she drew a long breath, as though freed from some unspeakable oppression.

"And your parents?"

"They *shall* come, if I have to motor up myself and fetch them."

After supper they sat in the smaller room, he with a pipe and a newspaper, she turning over some music. The lights were turned on in here, but the curtains had not been drawn. The light of the spring evening lingered on outside, and the red clouds covering the sky above the wide landscape seemed to stare in to the room and make the lights superfluous.

"I see you have got out your violin," he says—it was hanging on the wall close by the piano.

"I practised for a bit to-day. If Mother comes, it would be nice to show her I've not quite forgotten what she once taught me."

"I didn't think that you remembered much about that time?"

"Lately I have begun to remember more than you would think. And then there's the church music, when Lorentz comes."

"It's not up to much, is it?"

"The organ is horrible. And the choir is scattered to the four winds." She laid the music aside and turned to him. "See here—what do you think . . . suppose we gave the church a new organ?"

"The money is yours, my dear."

"Why do you answer like that?"

"I might just as well say you ought to do it. For I can see that you've made up your mind to already."

She looked at the window. "Times are not very good, of course. And then there is mother . . . from whom we got it all. This is the last thing she would have done."

"In your place I would only consider what I thought was right."

"Well, you understand, as Lorentz is coming at last, we must have things so as to make him wish to come again."

"You're right as right can be. But isn't it too late to get an organ put in before Whitsuntide?"

A flush passed over her face, and she looked at him with a guilty air. "You see . . . the thing is that we've got a good way with it already."

He threw back his head, and his pipe fell on to the floor. "Hullo, hullo, have . . . have we got a good way with it already?"

She came and sat on his knee and pulled his hair. "Now be good. The motor-lorry was down and brought up the parts a month ago, and the joiners have been hard at work since. I had no idea it would be such a bit of work getting it done."

"And it's only now you mention it?"

"Mayn't I have a secret of my own? If you had talked with people a little more . . . no, by the way, both the pastor and the joiners promised to say that it was only some repairs to the old one."

"And you ask for my advice now!"

"And then the parish clerk has been given a few coppers so as to get the choir together again. I fancy they're practising every single evening."

"Splendid. And you'll appear yourself and play the violin—solo?"

"Never in this world! I that haven't touched the thing for years!"

"You've been practising away in the outhouses when I was at home."

"Do you go about spying on me?"

"I search out all your ways." He caught her by the chin.

"Then you can listen now, and see whether it's at all possible." She ran over and took up the violin, tuned it, and began to play the music of a hymn, with light, long-drawn bow-strokes. She stood there in her light-colored dress, her figure a little fuller after child-bearing, but tall enough to carry it off well, her face, with its broad eyebrows, flushed under the dark-brown hair. She played with her eyes shut; it was clear that at that moment she was in church at the child's christening, and that Lorentz and her parents were there. But he wondered, as he sat there, whether he was with them too?

"Well?" she asked, as she finished.

"It's splendid, Louise. I had no idea you were so good."

"Are you making fun of me—or do you mean it?"

"I think you ought to play in the church that day. I'm in earnest."

She hung the violin up again and came and sat down at his side. "Even if I were good enough, I am afraid I wouldn't be equal to it that day. It . . . it will be a wonderful day."

Again she smiled at him. "Now, you must be nice to Lorentz, do you hear? You two must be friends. If you can manage that for me, there is . . . there is someone who . . . who might give you a hug for it."

"I'll do my best, my dear one." He took her on his knee and stroked her cheek.

She lay awake a long time, while he, tired out with his hard days in the forest, slept sound and calmly by her side.

Truly there is something strange about a brother. When they were both little, she had to be both sister and mother to him—to be constantly on the watch that nothing happened to him. She teased him more than enough, perhaps; but then she never could help bickering with men all the time if she cared for them at all. Then they grew up, and that matter of the inheritance cut in between them; and soon he found a new footing in his parents' affection, and no longer had need of a sister. She humbled herself time after time, and was repulsed. At times she had raged, and sworn that he might have it as he pleased; but could she help, all the same, forever going to the window to watch for him?

She had dreamed once or twice that he had come, and that all was well again, and had awakened to find that she had wept in her sleep. Then the day came when she found herself with a little child at her breast. There was no need for her to have it christened in church, and religion was not a thing she troubled herself about. But Lorentz was a pastor, and a great desire came over her now to bring her greatest treasure to him and ask him to bless it. Perhaps then . . .

And so she humbled herself once more and wrote.

Of course the church that day must be something quite out of the way in grandeur. Organ, choir, flowers. For Lorentz is coming. She sees him standing there, tall, well-made, in full canonicals, his hair at last lying down smoothly—she had pulled it for him many a time when they were small. Years have gone by, and now he is going to baptize little Merle. There, too, she sees her mother, white-haired and beautiful, carrying her baby to the font. A strange light hovers about Lorentz's face, as he reads the appointed words: "Let us hear the words of the Savior according to St. Mark. 'And they brought young children unto Jesus, that he should bless them . . . And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.' "

There, too, in the church she sees her old father, and at his side Jörgen, her husband, to whom she does not always behave as she should, perhaps. Well, well, there are not many more days till Whitsunday now.

She ends by stroking her sleeping husband's forehead softly.

VIII

No one would have said that the young man was a priest. He was cycling along by the shining lake in the warm sunshine, bareheaded, in his shirt-sleeves and with a rucksack on his back. His strong legs worked the pedals slowly; there was so much to see here. The fruit-trees were in bloom, the sown fields lay rolled and smooth, everywhere were green banks, and meadows pricked out with red and yellow. A scent of teeming earth rose up about him, and ever and again he would throw back his head to take a full breath of it.

It was Whitsun-eve. He had been determined not to come by train and be fetched in a car; he had always meant, if ever he did come back, to go up the hill to the manor alone. A pity that it had taken so many years for him to summon up strength for the journey.

And there comes the little town to meet him. The same small wooden houses, and on a hill in the middle the public school building overcrowing everything about it. The sawmill below Bruseth thrusts its warehouse-wharf out into the lake and shines golden in the sunlight; but work is shut down for the holiday. He bends forward and puts on speed as he rides through

the long main street, so that he may not be held up by an acquaintance; and now he is past the last houses, and the rise begins, and the fields of the Bruseth manor. He jumps down and goes on afoot, wheeling the cycle. Now and then he stops and gazes around him. Over the fields to the right stands a three-storied brick building, with long rows of windows and balconies out toward the lake. Around it are green lawns, sanded walks, newly planted trees, white benches and flower-beds. Aha! Now he understands. It is the hospital. Louise has not been idle. So far she has neither proclaimed a new society nor preached a new religion, and yet—look there!

And there is Bruseth! The houses are the same; to-day the flag is flying, and likely enough it is for him. Or have his parents really come?

But, once in the avenue leading to the house, he leans the cycle against the fence, goes into the fields, and throws himself down by a great weeping-birch. He has found once more the horizon that stretches league on league.

The lake, gray-striped where the water has just been ruffled by a breeze, the country-side beyond, red and white houses sending streaks of smoke toward the sky, dark plowlands, green pastures, cocks crowing everywhere. To see it once again!

Welcome, it all says.

The cellulose factories by the lakeside, half a dozen miles to the north, the railway bridge far to the south,

a church out on a point, a little red-painted farm far away on a hillside. Ridge behind ridge, the broad organ of the landscape. He remembers evenings with lights scattered over the country-side, the same lights within himself, the stars in the vault above, and the whole scene in his own soul. It was here the first tones of the eternal music came rushing upon him—does he not hear them now? Listen. The same rhythm in the sun and stars, in the thoughts of men, in the tiniest worm. Sing of this.

He has seen the fields and the leaf-trees out yonder spring into life and sink again to death in the autumn, only to awaken anew to the next spring. It is the same with men and races of men. The same with the soul. Sing of this.

He had tried to. He had tried in divers fashions. He had felt he must send back an echo of the swelling peal that swept toward him from the universe; it pressed upon him, it craved for release. But until he encountered his mother's heart he had not found the proper key.

Then he had felt that he must have others with him, and at last that all mankind must be with him. A day came when the universal soul focused itself in the universal man. The joys and sorrows of life, death and resurrection to a new life, all were made one in a single human form, he in all, and all in him. Mankind made immortal in their common symbol, in him who comes from God and to God returns. Sing of him.

That was what, as priest, he tried to do. Everyone has his own way. This was his.

And now he was soon to meet his mother.

He opens his eyes suddenly, sits up and listens. Far over the wide land the bells ring out. The church bells are ringing the holy season in. First, his friend out on the point; then another, half a dozen miles north by the lake shore, chimes in; and yonder, from a hill on the farther side, the distant tones of a third begin to call over hill and dale. Whitsuntide is come. In the quiet afternoon it seems as though earth itself were lying there calling upon heaven.

He sits a while listening with bowed head. Then he rises, takes his bicycle, and hastens up the avenue.

IX

No one in the courtyard; but the houses look at him, and flying about the house roofs are the swallows and titmice that have their nests under the eaves. He goes into the big sitting-room, where the high windows looking toward the lake and over the country-side fill the room with bright light. No one here either—but he hears voices he knows on the veranda. He goes out, captain sitting at a tea-table.

and there are his mother, his father, Louise and the

"What in the world . . . !" exclaims Louise. "And we've been down to the station, and the train came in without you. Oh, look how sunburnt he is!"

Then there was handshaking, and everyone talked at once, and soon he was sitting amidst them all.

It was strange to see his mother and father in these new surroundings. His mother in a black woollen dress with white lace collar, his father in a gray frieze suit —surely too warm for this weather. Both seemed to feel a little uncertain of themselves, like poor folks on a grand visit. But every time Lorentz looked at his mother her eyes met his, and each of them smiled, though perhaps neither knew it.

And so this is what Louise is like now! A woman grown; fresh and rosy as ever; plumper, indeed, but

that suits her, she is so tall. And Captain Rud, with whom he had had a nodding acquaintance in the old days; it is strange to see him the master here. When he looks at Lorentz his eyes seem to have a question in them; no doubt he thinks that the young pastor can hardly fail to have his own thoughts. This time his father has actually accepted a cigar; he does not join in the talk, yet he takes part, after a fashion, in what is going on, as he sits gazing in front of him and smiling. "He will have all the more to say, though, when we are alone," thinks Lorentz. He felt a little stab every time Louise turned to the captain and called him by his Christian name.

His trunk was sent for from the station; then he had to go with Louise to see the baby, and after that he went the rounds of the farm and said how-do-you-do to old acquaintances. But Fröken Norberg, the housekeeper, was not downstairs; he had to go up to her quarters on the third floor, and there he found himself in a spacious room with dormer windows, old mahogany furniture and a scent of lavender. She was sitting up in the tester-bed, propped with pillows. Her face was as white as the shadowy beard on her chin and cheeks, and he met the same large dark eyes. She smiled and held out a snow-white hand. "Ah, it's nice to see you once again."

Sick, Oh no! Only tired. As he knew, she wasn't so very young any more.

Lorentz sat by her chatting, with a mind full of memories. He had never been quite clear as to what were the relations between her and the widow at Bruseth. She had lived there, one day a servant, the next a member of the family, always kept at a distance when there was anything going on; but always the good angel of the house, bringing peace wherever she went. Now and again they had heard her singing a hymn in her room, as though to fortify herself. And now, too, on the table by her bedside lay a book of sermons and a hymn-book.

"Well, I shall often be up here," says Lorentz, as he gets up to go.

"The captain often comes too. He is up here every single day. He is a man in a thousand." And her dark eyes shine.

"What has become of you?" calls Louise.

She was waiting to take him to his old room; and when she opened the door he stopped short. "Well—!" said he. Everything in there was as it used to be. The school-books on the shelf, the pictures on the walls; why, even his old slippers lay there by the bed. On the table was a big bouquet of tulips, and on the night table a glass full of violets. "Good-day!" he heard himself say.

"Do you know the place again?" She turned to him when they were inside, with her eyes half-closed.

"That's not so difficult."

"You see everything has lain here waiting for you."

"Yes," he said—he had to walk to the window and look out, to hide what he felt.

"There is someone else here, too, that would like to see you again."

"Who is that?"

"Lady." She smiled a little.

"Have you still got the mare?"

"She's had nothing to do but look pretty the whole time. Well—Jörgen did ride her a couple of times, but that was soon put a stop to. Now she has a foal."

"Is she in the stable?"

"No, up in the horse-paddock with the rest of the horses. Shall we go up there? We've good time before supper."

In the kitchen the servants stood watching the brother and sister through the window, as they ran over the courtyard, hand in hand like two children, he still in his cycling suit, she in a light summer dress and bareheaded. Could that young fellow really be a priest!

Louise had stuffed a rusk into Lorentz's pocket and had brought some salt herself. Up in the fenced grazing-paddock a crowd of horses and mares, bay, black, and chestnut, came trotting up and surrounded their mistress. There the young woman stood in the midst of the troop, letting them lick her hands, while she laughed and babbled to them, quite in her element. "Call your sweetheart!" she said to Lorentz. The gray blood-

mare threw her head into the air when he called to her, and at length came up to him with her long-legged foal at her side. She let him pat her neck, and nibbled at his clothes. He remembered the time when last he stood there with the animal's muzzle against his cheek —many things had come to pass since then.

On the way back they talked a little of Mother Bruseth and of the old days. Then they sat down on the hillside overlooking the manor.

"What does Mother say to all this?" he asks.

"She wants to see the places where we used to play at house building. But I said we would wait till you came."

"And Father?"

"He doesn't say much. I shouldn't be surprised if he were longing to be back in his hut again. I . . . I don't seem to have the gift of keeping hold of the people that I'm fond of."

He bit at a grass blade, looking at her in silence. At last he said: "Louise."

"Yes?"

"Are . . . are you happy?"

"And you?"

"Answer me now."

"Is it so easy to say? It depends on what you call happy. If you had only written once in a while."

"You . . . you thought me a poor creature many a time, I dare say?"

"You might just as well have taken me along with

you on . . . on the new road you've begun on. But you jumped across a wide cleft and wouldn't let me follow you."

"There is something I must thank you for." He edged nearer.

"Me? Are you joking again?"

"For not giving me up."

"But why were you so set upon giving *me* up?" Again she was looking at him with half-closed eyes, while with one hand she tugged at the grass.

He bent his head in silence.

"You must admit that . . ." she breathed a little deeper . . . "that it wasn't my fault."

"Powers of evil, Louise. It hasn't been so very easy for me. But, thank God, I feel now that they are overcome. Thank you for not having given me up."

He held out his hand, but she did not take it. She bent nearer to him, gazing into his face, and when she found what she was seeking there, she threw her arms about his neck.

Behind them stood the troop of horses whinnying over the fence.

"Shall we have a race?" she says, starting up. "First man at the summer-house."

The others were still sitting on the veranda when the garden gate flew open suddenly and Louise came flying in, and just behind her a youth who vaulted the fence. It was Lorentz, it was the pastor. But as his feet touched the ground, he slipped and fell on his

knees, and the next moment Louise had reached the goal and shouted: "Baa—you're beaten!"

"Oh, these children!" says Merle, moving forward to the veranda-railing to scold them. "Have you ever seen such a boy! You might have broken every bone in your body."

"Oh, scold a little more, Mother!" begs Louise, coming up to them, all out of breath. "Go on, Mother. It's such a long, long time since I heard you do it. Mayn't I have a good scolding, too?"

There was time yet for them all to stroll about a little before supper, and Merle was still bent upon going to see where they used to play at houses. But now the captain tried to slip away. "I have a couple of letters to finish," he said. But Louise would not hear of it. "You must really be so good as not to break up the party," said she. And as this sounded a little too like a command, she put her arm in his and said, pleadingly, "Jörgen, you know you must come with us." He should not feel himself out in the cold.

They wandered about the knolls above the manor, and Louise was actually able to find the ruins of houses she and her brother had built when they were children. The mother stood and looked at them, and Lorentz looked at her. It was the first time he had seen his mother in a hat. It was of faded straw, with a black ribbon and a broad brim. Under it her face seemed very small, her eyebrows very broad and dark. Now she took up a stone and stroked it with her

hand. She must have been conjuring back her children's childhood. "Was this your cottage, then, Louise? And I daresay this stone was a bear that you had tamed, Lorentz?" She smiled all the time she spoke, but there was a curious quiver in her voice. The captain stood a little apart, gazing at this family that had been parted so long and was trying now to draw together again.

"Well now, Lorentz, you must go in and change before supper," said Louise, at last.

But on the way back, as father and son were walking side by side, Peer asked, "Shall we have a little turn together before we go to bed?" "Yes, gladly, father."

Merle had heard that the old housekeeper kept her bed; and she said she must go up and have a little chat with her now.

X

It was nearing midnight, but not yet dark, when Peer and Lorentz took the old farm-track northward along the ridge. The birds had gone to rest; there was no wind, and the sky was barred with gray and pink clouds. Lorentz had expected a set debate, but his father went along, chatting of this and that. He asked about the life among the fisher folk in the West, about the types of boats and gear. He had grown up in a fishing village himself. Then he fell silent for a time and peered around him at the landscape, but one could tell that he saw only a short way.

At length he stopped and looked at his son through his blue glasses. "It's a good thing that you young people see so much farther than we do."

"Do you think we see so much farther?"

"We elders have nothing to do but pack up. No doubt it's a part of Nature's hygiene that our dreams, too, are buried with us."

"Father—and you say that!"

Peer looked over his shoulder. "Perhaps we had better turn?" He sighed.

"Let's rather sit down here. You're not going to get away from me so easily."

The father stood for a moment after his son had seated himself on a stone. Finally he chose a place

near by, and sank down there, propping his stick between his legs and resting his hands on it.

"First of all, I must tell you, Father, that it anyone has been my teacher, it is you."

"Nonsense!"

"You and Mother."

"Yes, she perhaps." He laughed a little.

"I remember the walking-tour I took after my first visit to you. It was a very difficult time for me. I saw I could not do anything either for you or for Mother. And I could see no way of getting nearer to you."

"Hm."

"I remember, as I stood one day up in the mountains, a longing came on me to take my parents' name and ring it out over the whole wide world. That was one of the first steps on the road that has brought me here."

His father looked at him in silence, but began to breathe heavily.

"You are displeased with me, Father?"

"It doesn't matter about me. Are you pleased with yourself?"

"You thought I was called to create something quite new. To be a great reformer. Raise a new, a beautiful building to enshrine . . . what to you was great and sacred. Yes, if I'd been able to do that, why . . . why then I suppose I should have won you wholly."

"You don't believe any more in anything new?

You think the old will serve for the future, too?" The father pressed his lips together.

"The great reformer will come in due time. But I do not envy him. It's not the doctrine, but the spirit it is taught in, that matters."

"Do you believe in what the church teaches?"

"I don't teach anything that I don't believe."

"But all these figments of man's brain that you are compelled to call the word of God?"

"Surely man too is a part of the godhead."

"Hm." Peer Holm dug into the earth with his stick. "Well, my dear boy—of course, it's a matter for you only. But I ask myself: can he be honest? You have to stand up in church and read the Augsburg Confession . . ."

"Yes, as a historical document. But it will have to be altered, that is clear."

"Will you start a movement for that?" The father raised his head and looked at his son.

"Perhaps. But the form of doctrine matters so little, Father. What does matter is to enter into the spirit of that which is greater."

"And you cannot do that outside the State Church?"

"I would rather unite than divide. For me a chief part of religion is sympathy with the multitude, both the living and the dead. I should like to be the leaven in the mass, but not to tear myself loose. Have you tried, Father, to dream not only of the future, but of

the past as well? We are of a piece with our forefathers, too. Anyone who comes to me and says that he has discovered God, except it is in fellowship with all the countless other human souls—him I cannot understand."

"I thought you had some ideas of your own?"

Lorentz shut his eyes, smiled a little smile, and pushed his straw hat back off his forehead. "I believe that all religions are groping toward the same goal, and I believe that we must be charitable to them all. A clear, unchanging organ note sounds on from everlasting to everlasting. I try to give ear to it and catch it. All the rest is mere form."

Both looked straight before them for a time. At last the father said, "And yet you can be a priest—and in the State Church."

"But, dear Father, it is just there that we are reshaping things, we who want to take all along with us."

The father bored his stick into the ground; again there was a pause. Then he said, suddenly changing the subject: "I hear a great many people have their names down for the communion to-morrow. Are you going to officiate?"

"I must consult the pastor of the parish about that."

"I know your mother would like to communicate . . . and I have told her that she must. She's been considerate enough and to spare for me already, without holding back now on my account. You must manage to take the service, Lorentz—for your mother's sake."

But suddenly the young man bowed his head and hid his face in his hands. It was some time before he looked up, and then he tried to laugh. But it was clear that this thought of his mother's taking the sacrament moved him deeply.

"I expect we had better go home now," said Peer, getting up. But first he went up to his son and laid his hands on his shoulders: "Thanks for this time we have had together. And thanks for that last letter of yours. It gave me so much to think about. We are children before the face of the eternal, you are right about that. And our theories on religion are like so many a-b-c's and picture books. Mine as well as yours—and all the others! I fancy we two are more nearly of a mind than you think. To-morrow, then, your mother will come to you at the altar—forgive me for not coming, too."

He drew himself up, and expanded his chest in a deep breath. Then Lorentz put his arm in his father's and they went slowly back through the quiet night.

It was still early morning when Louise awoke; but the sun was shining into the room already—it was five o'clock. She hears footsteps stealing along the passage and down the stairs—who can it be? She gets up, goes and lifts the blind, and looks down into the courtyard. There, past the outhouses, goes Lorentz, fully dressed, in a light suit and straw hat. Now, at this hour?

She dresses as noiselessly has she can and slips along the passage and downstairs. Once out, she follows the direction he has taken.

It is full day, but the morning freshness is still in the air. The sun stands blood-red over woods and meadows, the lake mirrors hills and settled lands, bird-song and busy wings are all about. The country-side is still asleep; no thread of smoke rises from the farms, but cocks are crowing everywhere.

"He'll be sitting at the stone table on the hill," she thinks to herself, and hurries on.

He was not sitting there. He was standing, gazing out over the wide landscape.

"Hullo, I say . . . !" she shouted.

"What, is that you!" He smiled, but remained standing where he was.

"I thought that a pastor who's to preach to-day would be spending the morning hours studying the Bible."

"That's what I am doing." He looked about him.

"Is it the Bible you're reading in now?"

"Exactly."

She sat down at the stone table and looked at him for a while without saying a word. At length he came and sat down beside her, put his arm around her shoulders and bent toward her.

"Louise—I couldn't sleep. This day! Your child! And Mother! And to be here with you again!"

"Mother is to take the sacrament."

"Did you get the letters from her, Loo, that she wrote when we were little, and wasn't allowed to send us?"

"Yes, she sent me them last winter. Poor Mother." She stroked his forehead lightly.

"It was a journey to Golgotha. And it lasted for twenty years. And Father—don't you think that he has borne his cross? How true it is, that Christ is the sum of us all! Ah, Louise, if only I were man enough to take those two lives and sow them abroad like mustard-seed. *There* would be a resurrection for them, through me."

She did not reply, but touched his forehead lightly once more.

"And now, to-day—Mother kneeling before me at the altar. I am not sure that I can bear it. And afterward—your child, Loo! To stand there and consecrate it to the holy life. And with this landscape all around me. Loo dear, I could not sleep."

Now she ran her hand through his hair. "You're not so good-looking as you were. And yet it may be that some people will think you are better looking. At any rate, it's a great thing you've come back here at last."

"There was one who would have it so."

"Oh. Who was that?"

"Socrates called him his dæmon."

"But was that the same as . . . ?"

He nodded.

"Maybe, then, you're not such a bad priest after all. Do you want to be alone? Shall I go?"

"I should be glad to have you here. But you must let me hold my tongue."

And in silence brother and sister sat on there on the hill together, with the birds flying about them, while the sun climbed up and up over lake and countryside.

XI

On the south side of the ridge lay the yellow-painted, timber church, with its white window-frames, black steeple, and the gravestones round about it. On ordinary Sundays it was apt to be as good as empty, but to-day there was a crowd of motor-cars and horse carriages outside. It was a real, glorious Whitsunday, and those who were still on the roads could hear the distant chimes from other churches, both south and north, and far over on the other side of the lake. A few of the young people from the town, too, had made their way up here to-day, for it was one of their comrades who was to preach.

Among a group in the churchyard stood Ola Langmo, pulling at his big beard, and telling people that it was really he that had turned Lorentz's thoughts to the church. "I said to the lad over and over again: 'Anyone can work a forest and manage a farm; but you're made for preaching,' said I. And now you'll hear whether old Langmo wasn't right."

Most of the seats were full when Peer Holm and Merle and the captain took their places in the middle of the church. Louise had said that she would come later, she had to be with the child as long as possible.

The captain whispered to his parents-in-law: "There's a crowd here from Bruseth to-day." Turning her head, Merle saw, on the seats at the back, weather-beaten men and women who seemed to belong together. No doubt they were her daughter's tenants and servants. In their midst sat a giant of a man with a white beard, looking like the father of all the rest.

Then a gray-haired man came into the choir and sat down on a seat apart. "That's the parish priest," whispered the captain. Merle felt a pang. If only he wouldn't be too hard on Lorentz to-day!

Peer sat with bowed head. Assuredly this was a day of strange things. He remembered his own childhood in the seaside parish, the church there, the singing, the people, the first impressions of beauty that there had streamed into his soul. In those days he too had dreamed of being a priest, but he had found no way to compass it. Then came the steel, the din of the factory, inventions, a life of ceaseless straining to out-distance others. Yet, nevertheless, the awe of the Temple had never left him; there had ever been a something that chimed on in his soul. It had only changed its form as his own aspirations changed. And then one day comes his son. A priest? Yes, for *his* Temple, of course. But the son made a choice of his own. Which of them was right? He had lain awake through the night thinking over their talk that evening. "Suppose the thing were thus: you, Peer, were set on building the Temple for yourself alone—Lo-

rentz wants to build it for all humanity. Suppose the thing were so?"

Here he sits with bowed head, and can find no way out of the maze.

The organ pealed forth, the singing began, but most people forgot to sing and turned their heads toward the gallery. This rush of music, that seemed as if it might lift the roof off, they had not heard before; and only very few had known that the organ was new. The choir-singing was much stronger than any could remember it; one would have thought that all the full and beautiful voices from the country far around had gathered there. And by this time they had had so much practice that they all felt sure of themselves and were not afraid to sing out.

The captain had expected to hear a violin join in. Could she have lost courage at the last moment? He felt certain that she was sitting up there near the organ and the choir.

And so she was. She had gone into a side room and tuned her violin, but at the last moment she had put it back into its case. She was not one who could easily find words to express her feeling—she chose rather to jest; but it is different when you can make a violin speak—only then you must be such a master that you can make it tell the whole story. And that, she felt, she was not. But the organ and the choir could be trusted to give utterance to her feeling along with all the rest.

She sat by the gallery railing, looking down into the crowded church. There sat her white-haired parents, and there sat her husband, who now, in the midst of this solemnity, seemed to her so lonely. Ought she not to go down there and sit by his side and slip her hand into his? But that hour with Lorentz on the hill that morning! And little Merle, who was to be baptized to-day! Organ and choir joined in now, and sang of it. The congregation down below joined in and sang of it. She bent her head, closed her eyes, and felt as if she, too, were playing along with them on her violin. That morning Lorentz had said that to baptize her child was to consecrate it to life's holiness. The organ, the choir, the congregation poured that out in song.

Peer Holm could not follow the words in the psalm-book, but he knew both words and music from bygone days. It is a strange thing about hymns, he thought; they seem to know all about a man. They seek out even the most hidden things and raise them up toward heaven. So it was now. Memories of childhood came forth in music; men, long dead, met him now, transfigured, in the hymn's solemnity. He remembered the time he was confirmed, the companions whom he had never met again; and lastly the time he was a bridegroom, and Merle stood there, young and beautiful—and now they were both old and white-haired. The hymn knew that too, and bore it all heavenward.

But there, into the choir, comes the young priest. It is the first time his parents have seen him in clerical

dress. The black robe makes him look even taller, the white ruff about his neck makes his fair hair seem a little darker than it is. This beardless youth is their son. Merle has to bring out her handkerchief. Peer sits very still, tilting his head a little, as is his wont, so as to see the better.

Now the priest kneels before the altar, while the hymn rolls on. Peer thinks: is he praying to one he calls God? Or is he only collecting his thoughts in face of the eternal mystery?

Peer calls to mind what his son said the day before. That once he felt a longing to ring his parents' name out over the whole wide world. That that was the first step on the road that brought him where now he is. That afterward he brought in others. That now he wants to bring in all mankind.

"Peer, if you had got your Temple—would you not have found yourself alone in it? Your son finds God through the souls of men, through sympathy with them. Did you never think of that?"

Above the young priest is the altar, with its silver candlesticks on the white cloth. The altarpiece pictures the Son of Man raising Lazarus from the dead. Legends! And yet—what have *you* to offer?"

Even now a change is going forward in Peer Holm. It is as though his own soul were merging itself in his son's. He would fain *be* him. As Lorentz kneels there now, perhaps he is looking out over all religions, all temples, all races of men. Peer tries to do the same.

Perhaps his son hears not only the psalmody here, but the voices of all mankind ascending to heaven, in hymns, in prayers, the dead as well as the living, all filled with the hunger for everlasting life. All in common have the same faith in the universal soul. It is possible they are wrong. He now, and the millioned millions throughout the ages, have perhaps been wrong. But if that be so, Lorentz will share their error with them. In spite of all, the souls of men sing the same hymn throughout the whole wide world: Life is holy, death is holy, resurrection is in us all. Peer feels that he, too, must be with them. The fervor of all the others sets his own aglow, through the faith of the others he begins himself to believe.

There stands his son before the altar conducting the service. Peer is with him. It is Peer himself who stands there. In your son you live again. From your soul he takes what he has need of. What you lack, you find again in him.

The young pastor does not intone, but reads loud and clearly, with head thrown back a little. Choir and organ answer. The sun streams in through the windows from the shining day without, touching the silver candlesticks on the altar with flame. This is worship in the Temple. All are joined in it.

Singing again. Choir, organ. Peer is in church indeed. All the faces about him are lit up with holy day. Merle sings, but she often has to wipe her eyes that

she may see this son who to-day stands there as deputy for God.

Now the young priest is in the pulpit. All has grown so still. All gaze at him. It seems as though hymn and organ tones have borne him up thither. He is grave, but his face is beautiful, full of something which soon will ring out over them all. He is to carry forward their devotions up there, moving on heights the psalm has made visible to all.

He reads the Gospel for the day, concerning the apostles on whom the Holy Ghost descended. The Master was dead. They were full of sorrow. He had said that he would come again. They hoped. And now, when they saw him transfigured by the light of memory, his words burned even deeper into their souls. They had seen his body. They now beheld his spirit. They stepped across the threshold between finite life and the everlasting.

Peer Holm drinks in every word. So far he might have said all this himself. It is still he himself who stands up there, finding utterance for what has often been in his heart. Now the pastor speaks of the Son of Man as a spiritual power through all the ages, of his revealed and hidden working, not in churches alone, but in all human life, which has grown ever toward higher and more beautiful forms. He has burst the bonds of the day's text, he is no longer in Judea, he is here. He has the landscape of his childhood all

around him. Whitsuntide is here. All are here. Flowers fill the woods and meadows, corn-fields are sprouting, the birds of passage are come, the heavens to-day are marvelously blue. He speaks of the spirit that makes the world beautiful—that makes life holy. He turns his face toward the nearest window, as if to draw fresh inspiration from the sunlight that streams through it. His face shines with visionary light.

The Holy Ghost is no longer a revelation for the apostles alone; it has inspired everything from the first day of creation, the gigantic travail of the universe, the smallest of flowers, every beautiful thought, every loving deed. It streams through all mankind's aspiration toward something better than that which is; it is in the workshop and the laboratory, in the gambols of the child, in the mother's carefulness, in the hopes of the sick, in the father's duty to hearth and home. All is spirit. All is God.

You say you do not believe. But God's responsibility to man is the same as man's to God. He who does not feel himself an accomplice in all the evil that comes to pass, he knows not God. He who does not feel his heart go up to heaven in thanks for the beauty he meets on earth, he knows not God. He who does not long for union with the highest perfection, he stands without. He must needs doubt. But it is himself who pronounces his doom.

He begins to give examples from the days of his youth in the parish here; he tells a story well, with

touches of humor. People stare and listen. Even a little girl with a hymn-book in her hand has climbed up on a bench to stare at him and listen. This she can understand. This is no thunderous harangue about sin and punishment and hell and judgment. No promises of a palm-waving paradise. No bathing in the blood of Jesus. He is describing the spirit that breathes from a landscape, at sunset, under starry skies, in glorious nights of moonlight on land and sea. He has seen the heavens clothe themselves in scarlet and gold, and mirror themselves in soul and thought as in great, tranquil mountain lakes. He pictures fruitful lands, blue fiords, snowy peaks, that people feel to be their own, and yet in these, too, God is everywhere. Peer Holm gropes for a hand and finds it. It is rough with toil and smaller than his own. This is a sermon about a youthful God and a youthful world. The scent of earth and flowers is here. Peer feels the pressure of the hand he sought. The sermon began in Judea. Now it is reveling in the joys of summer in this their own land. It gives new meaning to old texts. It is as though it poured new wine into holy vessels. It calls youth together to sport on grassy slopes. It takes in the song and laughter filling the bright northern nights. It began with a Bible text. It ends in a symphony!

The parish priest sits up in the choir, with a grave face, looking on the ground.

And so the sermon ends. Hymn and organ music

again. Merle and Peer look at one another and smile. They are still holding each other by the hand.

Peer has so much to gaze at and ponder. At last he awakes to find that communion has begun.

XII

THERE stands the young priest before the altar once more; and now he wears, over his white surplice, the red stole with its golden cross. It is as though he had clothed himself in garments from another state of being, from the land of dreams of the divine.

People are moving forward toward the choir. There is an old, hunchbacked woman in threadbare clothes among them. Psalm and organ tones call the folk together. Merle rises, looks at her husband as if begging his forgiveness for leaving him, and receives an encouraging nod and smile.

So Peer is left alone. Just then Louise comes and sits down beside him, but she leans over toward her husband. Peer is still alone. In her heart Louise is longing to take her Jörgen with her and go up there with the others, with her mother. She longs to show Lorentz that when and where he meets the Highest she will join him. She cannot bring herself to ask his forgiveness for not always having been to him as she ought, but up there he will understand. She looks at her husband. Their eyes meet. There are things she would like to make right with him, too. Before the altar surely he too will understand. Perhaps up there a new spirit will make them really one. She rises. He

does the same. She smiles to him and moves forward. He follows. Peer looks at them. A new light is on the young husband's face. And so the two go up the aisle together.

But now Peer is left alone in earnest. His own Temple-visions are fading away. He would fain be where the others are. He would fain feel along with them the presence of the Highest. Merle! His whole being seems to cry to her. Has his name been put down for communion? He does not know. But he feels as though, before the altar, he may once more be united to this woman, who has shared good and ill with him all these many years. Here and now they may be wedded once again. And yet more. His whole life, both their lives, may be exalted and hallowed by their son.

So he gropes his way forward from his seat. He follows the others. People gaze at this half-blind man in gray frieze clothes hobbling forward alone toward the altar.

He finds a place by Merle's side. And as they two stand there, hand in hand, the young priest turns and his eyes fall on them. A sudden tremor goes through him, but only for a moment. Then his face begins to shine. And there he sees Louise, too. And, farther on, his old friend, the foreman with the huge beard. The hymn has called them together.

Slowly he passed down the row with the bread and the wine. He felt a wave of love bear him toward all

of them and all toward him. It was a little difficult to stand upright. But things went better when, a little later, laying his hands upon their heads, he could answer and say to them, in God's name, that their sins should be forgiven them.

By the hunchbacked old woman he bent a little and stood still for a moment, looking into her face as though it was in his heart to call her mother.

When he stood before his parents, kneeling there, white-haired and old, Merle looked up, but seemed dazzled, as though it was something more than her son that she saw. And in this moment Lorentz felt that now, at last, he had come home to his mother. His father looked down. But when Lorentz laid his hand upon the old man's head his form began to tremble.

The organ tones floated out softly. The congregation sang no more.

DATE DUE

PT
8950
.B6
N813

Bojer, Johan

The new temple.

DATE | ISSUED TO

PT
8950
.B6
N813

DEMCO


W6-AEL-891
The new temple
PT8950.B6N813
3 5033 0019 4561 7